Houston Graduate School of Theology

# Leading a Group of Newly Released Inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, to Reconnect with God and Live Productive Lives in Society using Spiritual Disciplines and Missional Living Affiliated with Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry Ministry

A Project Report Submitted to the Faculty for Students in

Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor Ministry

By

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**Leading a Group of Newly Released Inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, to Reconnect with God and Live Productive Lives in Society using Spiritual Disciplines and Missional Living Affiliated with Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry Ministry**

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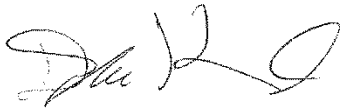

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Pastor M. Smarr

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## Contents

Preface ..... ix

Abstract ..... x

Chapters

I. Introduction ..... 1

II. Biblical, Historical, and Practical Foundations ..... 9

III. Action ..... 54

IV. Evaluation ..... 67

V. Conclusion ..... 70

Appendices

A. Invitation to Participate in the Project ..... 74

B. Confirmation Letter ..... 76

C. Behavioral Mental Health Assessment ..... 78

D. Personal Assessment Survey ..... 81

E. Informed Consent and Confidentiality Form ..... 83

F. Spiritual Discipline and Practice Self-Assessment ..... 88

G. Project Curriculum ..... 92

H. Final Project Spiritual Disciplines Evaluation Survey ..... 107

I. Final Project Overall Evaluation ..... 109

J. Project Narrative Proposal ..... 111

Bibliography ..... 130

## Preface

This ministry project was designed to address the need to lead a group of newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, to reconnect with God and live productive lives in society using spiritual disciplines and missional living affiliated with Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry Ministry located in Houston, TX. The project's purpose was to demonstrate Jesus Christ's command to his disciples in fulfilling "The Great Commission," showing missional living and the concept of mental models by teaching seven spiritual disciplines, which were implemented to help complete the overall outcomes of the overall outcomes the project. Through these teachings, the Holy Spirit's power was activated to help meet the tasks.

## Abstract

The incarcerated often feel that God has left and forsaken them. These inmates may become distracted, finding it difficult to reconnect with God and live productive lives. Elements of culture look at those behind prison walls as the lowest, most horrible people globally, deserving no more chances. Many inmates have indeed committed terrible, unrighteous acts that merit their current convictions. However, since God does not give up on people, a community outreach project was designed to give those released from prison a chance to reconnect with God to live productive lives in society.

# Chapter I

## Introduction

The subject of this project was the development of a training curriculum for the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, affiliated with Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry Ministry in Houston, Texas (hereafter, SFRR). Since visiting the Jester III Prison Unit, the need to help newly released inmates reconnect with God was primarily related to offering the teachings of seven specific spiritual disciplines and demonstrating the concepts of missional living and mental models.

Furthermore, the project curriculum revolved around seven spiritual disciplines, hoping, upon completing the project, that all participants would experience a change of mind, reconnect with God, and live productive lives in society. Ways to reach these outcomes were to demonstrate the concepts of the Great Commission, missional living, and mental models.

Currently, the prison system is filled with many volunteers and ministries who regularly visit and minister to the inmates. Moreover, some newly released inmates explained that their interactions with those specific volunteers and ministries did not give them a reason to change their minds to reconnect with God and live productive lives in society. After questioning many of the newly released inmates and meeting with prison officials about the inconsistency in this matter, it was discovered that there had not been a consistent or effective ministry program available to help these inmates.

Furthermore, the responses and answers from the newly released inmates showed that the other ministry programs that had been introduced to them from various volunteers and ministries focused only on non-productive ministry activities that distracted the newly released inmates from learning what it takes for someone to want to reconnect with God and live a productive life in society. In addition, some of the newly released inmates argued that they had tried to rely on their judgment in making life-changing decisions in this matter but had continued to fail, which caused their actions to become counterproductive.

The senior leadership of SFRR was contemplating ideas to create a program within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Jester III Prison Unit that would help address these specific concerns. The challenge, however, was finding people with the heart, passion, and experience to implement a practical prison ministry project and get the necessary support from the prison unit and ministry volunteers.

Therefore, SFRR decided that it would need to follow the basic principles of the Great Commission for this project to be effective in addressing these specific concerns. This included providing training by using seven spiritual disciplines and demonstrating the concepts of missional living and mental models to positively affect the newly released inmates to reconnect with God and live productive lives in society.

## The Project Setting

The Jester III Prison Unit is a TDCJ state facility founded on unincorporated land in Fort Bend County, Texas. The prison unit is on U.S. Highway 90A, four miles east of central Richmond, Texas. The unit opened in July 1982 with about 940 acres of land, and

it is housed on the same ground as the Jester I, Carol Vance, and Jester IV Units. Altogether, this state prison unit houses 1,131 inmates.[1]

SFRR, located in Houston, Texas, is a "Restoration Ministry." This ministry was organized in 2004 by Dr. Barbara Nelson and her husband, Pastor Michael Nelson, both ordained pastors. The Nelsons are Approved Volunteers and Mentors for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice System.

The Nelsons' ministry is based on their passion for the community behind the prison walls. Pastor Michael and Dr. Barbara Nelson are on-site pastors at the Eastham Medium Custody Chapel in Lovelady, Texas, where they conduct services every Sunday evening. The following summarizes how SFRR helps the Overcomer's Restoration and Reentry process in prison and community systems.

The SFRR's first ministry assignment was to conduct a Community Marriage Seminar. It was a fantastic seminar full of fun and fellowship. The Nelsons have been married for thirty years and believe that all marriages can be restored; they are troopers in marriage restoration. SFRR has conducted marriage seminars within the prison system at the Darrington Unit, Stringfellow Unit, and the Cleveland Correctional Unit through their belief in restoring marriages.

The ministry follows Matt. 25:36, which states: "I was naked, and you clothed me, I was sick, and you visited me, I was in prison, and you came to me." In addition to assignments of prison worship services, the ministry attends to various prison units within the State of Texas and holds Empowerment Seminars at multiple prisons throughout the year. These seminars include games where the inmates win Christian

1. "Unit Directory," Texas Department of Criminal Justice, accessed May 5, 2021, https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/unit_directory/j3.html.

books and receive powerful testimonies from ex-offenders (overcomers). In addition, each person gets a Certificate of Attendance that can be used to help them develop their Parole Packets upon release. Moreover, SFRR has conducted baptisms for the Darrington Prison Unit in Rosharon, Texas, since 2013.

Over the years, SFRR has continued to help individuals transition from prison to home. They have also served as contacts for those who need help with resources, driver's licenses, shelters, halfway houses, food, clothing, and employment, to name a few.

SFRR supplies Annual Care Packets (soap, deodorant, and toothpaste) to individuals in the Jester III Main Unit and Jester III Trusty Unit during Christmas. The ministry prepared more than one thousand Care Packets in 2016. In addition, SFRR was recently instrumental in replenishing the indigent hygiene supplies that the Darrington Unit had exhausted because of the other inmates (overcomers) who had to shelter at Darrington due to the flooding at their perspective units from an overflow of the Brazos.

SFRR travels over 85,000 miles annually, serving people in Texas prisons each year. In addition, the ministry holds annual Community Restoration and Empowerment Seminars outside of the prison, including resources for family members to help their loved ones upon release, panel discussions of members such as prison chaplains, sheriff department representatives, halfway house representatives, ex-offenders, ex-offender family members, and more. In addition, they are available to help family members as their loved ones transition home.

SFRR has access to multi-purpose facilities in the local and surrounding areas to help overcomers and their family members with computer training, clothing, connections with employment, halfway houses, clothing, food pantries, and so on.

The SFRR team consists of about twenty-five partners who partner in this effort. The senior leadership has a passion for soul winning, believing that everyone should have a personal and effective relationship with God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

## Relevant Personal History of Ministry

The call to ministry was first experienced in the early 1970s while living life as a born-again Christian. As time passed and through the elegance of God, the power of the Holy Spirit had been activated to consider accepting the call to ministry. Serving as a junior deacon, Sunday school teacher, musician, and praise and worship leader led to opportunities to preach and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. The official call to ministry, however, had not been accepted at the time.

The call to preach and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ was officially accepted during the late 1980s. However, the overall involvement in ministry came from the Holiness-Pentecostal experience through the religious affiliation with the Fire-Baptized Holiness (F.B.H.) Church of God of the Americas that was organized and founded under Bishop William Edward Fuller, Sr., in 1908.

Through a local church affiliation at the New Zion F.B.H. Church in Lawrence, New York, where Pastor David Rivers, Sr. was the Senior Pastor for fourteen years, a strong relationship with God to do ministry regularly was developed. The experience and practices in ministry continued with the affiliation and fellowship at the Washington Temple Church of God in Christ in Brooklyn, New York, under the pastoral leadership of Bishop F. D. Washington, Sr.

During the continued relationship and fellowship between these two church affiliations, a passion for outreach ministry began. Being raised in an urban community in

Queens, New York, allowed for more opportunities to help fulfill the Great Commission through community outreach and urban community street ministry.

After moving to Houston in 1989, a fellowship began with various Christian religious organizations. Finally, in 1992, after becoming licensed and ordained to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ under Rev. Williams, Sr. from the Greater Progressive Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, the community outreach ministry expanded across the city and state and nationwide.

For the past thirty-five years, ministry experiences have grown tremendously, developing even more focus in pastoring, preaching, teaching, mentoring, and musical gifts and talents. By following the works and teachings of the Apostle Paul and realizing that God had undeniably activated a call to preach the gospel and make disciples through the power of the Holy Spirit, it became clear that these actions should continue as a lifestyle.

In 2013, the Bachelor of Arts degree in Telecommunications with a Radio, Television, and Film specialization from Texas Southern University in Houston was earned. Following the bachelor's degree, the Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling and the Master of Divinity in Leadership degrees were earned from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. This project report is the final step toward fulfilling the Doctor of Ministry degree specializing in Pastoral Leadership from Houston Graduate School of Theology.

After serving as one of the prison ministry partners at SFRR, current ministry responsibilities to support the SFRR's affiliation with TDCJ's Jester III Prison Unit Richmond were accepted. Through these ministry responsibilities, a positive relationship

with current and newly released inmates was developed to show unconditional love and humility on behalf of Jesus Christ.

Regarding this project, the primary responsibility was to minister to newly released inmates out of their devotion to Jesus Christ, whether they were believers or unbelievers of the faith. As a licensed, ordained minister, responsibilities included being impartial, showing unconditional love, and seeking to help everyone, as Jesus did.

During the project, the ministry emphasized sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with newly released inmates, so they could come to recognize God and receive Jesus as personal Savior. The Holy Spirit's power effectively was implemented to help the newly released inmates experience Jesus Christ so that they would know how important Jesus was to their daily living. Throughout this project, the overall ministry responsibilities included ministering to the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of the newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit to help them reconnect with God and live productive lives in society.

## Outcomes and Measurable Assessments Using Qualitative and Quantitative Research

The project was designed with three outcomes in mind. The first outcome was developed to see how many of the overcomers newly released from the Jester III Prison Unit actually utilized the Great Commission's concepts, missional living, mental models, and the project's curriculum related to seven specific spiritual disciplines.

By using the project's curriculum, the second outcome was designed to see which of the seven spiritual disciplines mentioned in the project would actually help change the minds of the newly released inmates to reconnect with God and inspire them to live

productive lives in society. At the close of the seven-month project, the measurement included an evaluation to address which spiritual discipline(s) helped the participants in their quest to reconnect with God and live productive lives in society.

The third outcome was developed to measure and address how many newly released inmates actually changed their minds and wanted to reconnect with God to live productive lives in society. The plan was to discover ways for the newly released inmates to share their experience(s) in the project and to address whether the overall project caused them to change their minds and reconnect with God or not.

As measurable assessment tools, weekly study lessons, test assessments, metric systems, surveys, and opportunities for individual testimonies were designed. In addition, the assessment measurements included comprehensive participant attendance data, personal spiritual growth data, mental health assessment, and support data related to spiritual disciplines, which were mentioned in the core curriculum before and after the project's implementation. Furthermore, the evaluation included observations and statistics about the overall progress of SFRR's support in this matter.

The vision from the ministry leadership of SFRR and the project director was to develop a consistent program for the Jester III Prison Unit that allowed newly released inmates the opportunity to change their lives for the better. With research in biblical, historical, and practical foundations, the dream was that spiritual and mental growth could be achieved for the newly released group of inmates targeted in this project. The report now turns to the specific foundations researched.

## Chapter II

## Biblical, Historical, and Practical Foundations

The research chapter focuses on the Great Commission, as presented in Matt. 28:16-20, missional living, mental models, and the classic spiritual disciplines related to the project. The first section, Biblical Foundations, addresses the Great Commission's importance as the project's foundation. The second section, Historical Foundations, reviews and reveals the impact of the classic spiritual disciplines through the lenses of specific spiritual writers. Finally, the closing section, Practical Foundations, provides the basis for missional living and the prospective of mental models.

### Biblical Foundations

Biblical research that focuses on witnessing often uses the Great Commission's story (Matt. 28:16–20) as a catalyst to discuss spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ and building the kingdom of God. In Matthew's gospel, the Great Commission is a command that Jesus gave to his disciples to preach the gospel in all the world. He gave this command to his disciples because of his conditional love and acceptance for humanity.[1] In this section, seven areas of reference will be addressed to provide a framework for Jesus's command to his disciples about the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16–20). Following are the seven areas that will be referenced and expounded upon:

1. H. N. Ridderbos. *Matthew*, Bible Student's Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 556.

- The Characteristics of Jesus Christ and his Disciples
- The Setting Between Jesus and his Disciples
- The Circumstances Surrounding Jesus and his Disciples
- Jesus Motivates his Disciples to Act
- Jesus Commands his Disciples
- Jesus Teaches his Disciples
- Jesus Christ's Promise to his Disciples

## The Characteristics of Jesus Christ and His Disciples

According to W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, Matthew's gospel begins the Great Commission's story by first revealing the character of Jesus and his disciples. Then, he presents the disciples as followers of Jesus Christ and lets the reader know that this was a teaching moment between Jesus and his disciples.[2] Throughout Matthew's gospel, the disciples are considered a community group of men for whom Matthew reveals their unique qualities as individuals whose desire is to serve.[3]

Matthew 28:16–20 addresses the instructions Jesus gave to his disciples to continue reproducing themselves for as long as he wanted.[4] Throughout Matthew's gospel, the disciples followed, studied, and sometimes questioned Jesus's teachings, worshipped, and, at times, showed apprehension towards him. The disciples' journey

2. W. D. Davies, and D. C. Allison. *Matthew 19–28*, International Critical Commentary. (New York: T & T Clark, 1997), 676–7.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

may seem radical throughout this gospel story, but the result was quite rewarding for them.[5]

R. V. G. Tasker infers that Matthew's gospel portrays Jesus's character in this story as one being a servant leader and king, worthy of all the glory and honor. At the beginning of this gospel, the reader grasps who Jesus is—in his humanity, a descendant from King David's royal lineage and Abraham's family line, who is also considered the Father of the Israelites.[6]

After Matthew presents the story of the birth of Jesus Christ, the reader is introduced to his new name, which is called Immanuel (Hebrew: עִמָּנוּאֵל meaning, "God is with us"), about whom the prophet Isaiah previously prophesied (Isa. 7:14). In Matt. 28:18-20, Jesus is considered the Messiah, who has come to fulfill the prophecies, explain the Old Testament revelations, perform supernatural events, and show his followers by what means they may help achieve God's plan for humanity.

At the end of Matthew's gospel, Jesus Christ is resurrected from the dead after being unlawfully accused and sentenced to death by crucifixion on a cross. The author reveals that he is the only possible Messiah who came to earth to fulfill the messianic prophecies and prove himself to be the only begotten son of God incarnated through the resurrection events. Matthew did an excellent job finding each character and painting a perfect picture of this story's setting.

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5. Davies and Allison. *Matthew 19–28*, 676–7.

6. R. V. G. Tasker. *The Gospel According to St. Matthew.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 273.

## The Setting of Jesus Christ and His Disciples

According to Matthew's gospel, the Great Commission's setting is Galilee on an unnamed mountain. Frederick Dale Bruner argues that the unnamed mountain has been in an ongoing dispute. In Matthew's gospel, Bruner suggests that he never reveals the mountain's actual name, as he only writes that the mountain was in Galilee.[7]

Bruner helps readers understand that Matthew's decision to leave out the mountain's actual name has led to questions and that he did not need to reveal that information right away throughout this story. Therefore, after taking a closer look at this story, the only mountain he mentions is the Mount of Olives. Previously in Matthew's gospel, he shows he is heading towards an unidentified peak in Galilee's region, and his official visits to other unknown mountains are addressed in his gospel.[8]

Bruner further suggests that one will always wonder why Matthew did not mention the mountain's actual name at first. There have been suggestions and ideas, but none have been confirmed. Nevertheless, Craig Evans argues that Matthew gave the Sermon on the Mount on a mountain in Galilee. Therefore, Bruner tries to settle this dispute by merely saying that the mountain was in Galilee.[9] He argues that this verse is translated, "The mountain where Jesus gave his command to his disciples."[10]

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7. Frederick Dale Bruner. *The Churchbook: Matthew 13–28.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 808.

8. Ibid., 808.

9. Craig Evan. *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary*. (Colorado Springs: Victor, 2001), 148, 531–2.

10. Bruner, *The Churchbook,* 808–9.

Although this information could be valid, Bruner elucidates that there is no biblical evidence to confirm it.[11] He also argues that most biblical translations of the text leave that argument open and unresolved. Bruner also explains that others have said that the mountain in this text could be connected to Moses's commissioning service near the burning bush, which generates a Mosaic equivalent. Moses also received this type of command on a mountain, as the disciples do in this story.[12]

Rudolf Schnackenburg argues that the significance and setting of the unnamed mountain and location where Jesus met with his disciples are based on the author's interpretation in Matt. 28:16. Schnackenburg's theory suggests that the mountain and location in question here is only a symbol of Jesus Christ's overall association with his disciples, just as God appeared to Moses in the Old Testament, which infers, "And He said, 'Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be the token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God on this mountain'" (Ex. 3:12).[13]

Schnackenburg tries to parallel this matter when Matthew writes, "The eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them," and "worshipped Him" (Matt. 28:16). He argues that Matthew could have been referring to the Mosaic example. Still, if not, it establishes a similar type of significance with Matthew's introduction to his story of the Great Commission. Therefore, Schnackenburg explains that Matthew gives the reader a chance to review the Mosaic example and

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11. Bruner, *The Churchbook,* 808–9.

12. Ibid.

13. Rudolf Schnackenburg. *The Gospel of Matthew*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 297–8.

clarify what he wrote about the spiritual connection between Jesus Christ and his disciples.[14]

## The Circumstances Surrounding Jesus and his Disciples

In Matt. 4:12, the author reveals that at least two circumstances set up this meeting's primary condition with his disciples on the mountain—worship and doubt. First, biblical history shows that only a few people had already worshiped Jesus before giving his disciples the command in Matthew's gospel.

In Matthew 2, the three wise men revered Jesus when he was a child. In Matthew 14, the disciples began to worship him after seeing him walk on water. In Matthew 28, the disciples also worshipped him after his resurrection. In Matt. 4:1-11, however, the author argues that Jesus tells Satan to worship him due to God's command. Therefore, when he is glorified, these actions show his deity's right in the following verse.

Bruner argues that, in Matthew's gospel, Jesus was worshipped and doubted at the same time. He explains that the Greek translation of "some doubted" also can be translated as "others doubted." Furthermore, he explains that the apologetic argument in the word "others" appears in the text's original translation.[15]

Charles H. Talbert explains that the word translated as "others" has been well-received rather than the translation of the word "some." This is because the term "some" carries a vagueness in the original Scripture. The name "some" denotes "some of the disciples." He argues that the word "some" may also mean "others" who may have been

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14. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 297–8.

15. Bruner, *The Churchbook*, 809–10.

with Jesus during that time. Furthermore, it may seem to the reader that the word "some" may refer to some or all the disciples.[16]

Talbert argues that both terms, "disciples" and "some," are considered a male group in the Greek translation. Moreover, he also explains that no other people were present between Jesus and his disciples during this time. In using the word "appointed," it appears that he only instructed his disciples to come during this time, so others would not feel obligated to go at that time.[17]

Moreover, Leon Morris wonders how any of Jesus's disciples could ever doubt him after seeing their brother Thomas.[18] He explains that others have argued that the word "doubted" can be better translated as "hesitated."[19] Frederick W. Danker supports either translation while explaining that others seem to keep the word "hesitation" instead of the word "doubt."[20] Finally, Bauer argues that the disciples doubting Jesus during this time is uncertain.

Bruner elucidates that a few of the disciples may have been unsure of their ability to live up to Jesus's command, or they wondered whether this command was for real or whether they were having a spiritual vision of some sort. However, regardless of what

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16. Charles H. Talbert. *Matthew,* Paideia. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 312.

17. Ibid.

18. Leon Morris. *The Gospel According to Matthew.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 745, John 20:19–29.

19. Ibid., 744-745.

20. Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* Translated by F. W. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich (1957); rev. ed., translated by F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker (1979), 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 252.

may have happened, Bruner argues that the issue is not to focus on the disciples doubting Jesus. Instead, one needs to focus on Jesus, ignoring the doubts towards him.[21]

Donald A. Hagner explains that, while the concept of one doubting Jesus can be a clarification, it may be the reason he had to address some of the disciples' doubts first before he gave the ultimate command.[22] In Matt. 14:22-33, the author allows the reader to understand that Jesus Christ is considered the only one who has "all power" over everything and that he will be with them forever. Therefore, Matthew suggests that the disciples should not doubt their ability to fulfill his command, just as Peter got a chance to walk on water before he began to question himself as a disciple (Matt. 14:22–33).

Ulrich Luz argues that, in this event, Jesus wanted to know why Peter would doubt him, which implied that Peter should never have contradicted the power of the Holy Spirit. Matthew also uses this event as a rare occurrence for one to give complete reverence to Jesus Christ.[23]

In exegeting this text, the apologetic argument seems to be for one always to obey and rely upon Jesus Christ no matter the situation, which would allow one to overcome any doubt of Jesus's sovereignty. By focusing on this perspective, Matthew reverts to the earlier passage of Scripture to remind the reader that the concept of doubt can be overcome through one's faith and belief in Jesus Christ.[24]

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21. Bruner, *The Churchbook,* 810.

22. Donald A. Hagner. *Matthew 14-28.* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 884.

23. Ulrich Luz. *Studies in Matthew*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 134.

24. Ibid.

## Jesus Motivates His Disciples to Act

In Luz's discussion of the Great Commission, he notes that Jesus gives his disciples undivided attention and presents a good reason for his disciples to obey his command while addressing some of the other disciples who may still doubt him during this time.[25] Michael J. Wilkins explains that he clarified to his disciples that he has all the "land authority," meaning everything on earth. He argues that Jesus gives his disciples two powerful explanations of why and how his power occurs.[26]

Jesus teaches his disciples about the action of giving, which is correlated in Matt. 4:1-11 when Satan tries to tempt Christ. Satan offers to give Jesus dominion of the earth only to get reverence and worship from him, but Matthew reveals that Jesus disregarded Satan's command. Thus, the full authority of Jesus is activated from God and through the complete actions of his death, burial, and resurrection.

Leon Morris explains that Matthew's gospel wants the reader to understand that Jesus Christ's authority has no limitations. This means that if the Holy Spirit is activated, it enables Jesus to have the supernatural power to have complete authority over the entire earth. He further notes that Matthew allows the reader to understand that Jesus has no restrictions on what he can do over the whole universe.[27]

Morris argues that Jesus explains to his disciples that he can change lives for the better through the Holy Spirit. Matthew allows the reader to understand further what

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25. Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 135.

26. Clinton E. Arnold. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 251.

27. Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 745.

Jesus's complete authority over the earth can mean to his life. Jesus's sovereignty does not just cover all the heavens or the world; instead, it extends throughout heaven and earth. Whether one believes that Jesus has authority over everything only can be argued by those who are unbelievers. Therefore, nothing should ever deter Jesus's disciples from fulfilling his command since he has all power as to what happens in this world.[28]

## Jesus Commands His Disciples

In this part of the story, Matthew sets up the premises by revealing that Jesus commanded his disciples to "go" and "make disciples" of all nations. This story has various linguistic and etymological issues, including cataloging the deponents, their connotation, and the critical verb's denotation.[29] Furthermore, there are background problems with both deponents. This issue presents an overly complicated sentence within open discussions for it to be a short sentence. Therefore, scholars and readers must be cautious when approaching this text.[30]

Wallace suggests that "make disciples" is the command that can be considered an imperative. Therefore, the word "go" can be regarded as a present circumstance that rides along with that command of making disciples, which follows his command expounding the means for how the command to make disciples would be carried out, namely, baptizing and teaching.[31] Therefore, it can be acceptable for one to translate that thought

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28. Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 745–6.

29. Ibid., 746–7.

30. Ibid.

31. Daniel B. Wallace. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament.* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 630, 645.

in Matt. 28:19 as "go," which is the point Carson makes in the commentary entitled "Mathew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew–Luke*.[32]

Furthermore, Matt. 26:42 gives the reader a setting in a context related to the Garden of Gethsemane. Matthew chronicles Jesus as him "going away and praying." Therefore, "going away" is the deponent, and it rationally heralds "praying," which is considered the critical verb. Thus, these two instances exemplify Matthew's original interpretation of his writing in the Great Commission's story.[33]

Schnackenburg explains that the other two deponents in the text related to the main verb are "baptizing" and "teaching." Therefore, the main question is how both deponents support the critical verb. Analysts and Greek researchers seem to believe that both deponents expound on the action of the crucial verb.[34]

Matthew argues that Jesus is telling his disciples that the way to make disciples is to first "go," which means they would need to leave their current location and travel to another, which further proves the gospel writer's understanding of the Jews not obeying Jesus and his message being preached to people who were not Jewish.[35]

Craig S. Keener contends that Jesus did not rule out the possibility of the gospel being preached to Jews because, while the disciples remained in Galilee, he commanded

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32. D. A. Carson. *Matthew*. In *Matthew–Luke.* The Expositor's Bible Commentary. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 663.

33. Schnackenburg. *The Gospel of Matthew*, 299. Talbert, *Matthew*, 313. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 630, 645.

34. Carson, "Matthew," 667-668.

35. Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 554.

his disciples to preach the gospel there as well.[36] Furthermore, this is the ultimate command from Jesus for one to "make disciples." Matthew explains that Jesus wants every believer to replicate the gospel spiritually through the act of baptizing and teaching others to become disciples.

## Jesus Teaches His Disciples

Ridderbos explains that the notion of teaching can be considered a characteristic of "make disciples." After studying this text, he argues that Matthew relied on Jesus's command to his disciples to teach all that he has commanded them.[37] James Montgomery Boice suggests that Jesus explains to his disciples that the gospel's teachings must continue even after being baptized. Therefore, all believers' responsibilities are to baptize and to teach all the commandments they were taught.[38]

Raymond E. Brown explains that the early church's actions were to elucidate God's kingdom and baptize. The disciples taught them to see all things that Christ had taught them. They passed these on to new disciples without adding or subtracting from Jesus's teachings so that false teaching and cultic movements would not arise from within them.[39] When Jesus returned to earth after being with his Father in heaven following his resurrection, he reassured his disciples that he would never leave or forsake them. Jesus transferred his spirit into his disciples to be with them until the end of the age. This great

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36. Craig S. Keener. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 718.

37. Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 556.

38. James Montgomery Boice. *The Gospel of Matthew.* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 646.

39. Raymond E. Brown. *An Introduction to the New Testament.* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1997), 203.

assurance gave them the hope and support they needed to help fulfill his request for humanity.[40]

Jesus's assurance also gave the disciples the strength they needed in their ministry to help fulfill the Great Commission that Jesus had placed on their lives. God chose Moses to lead a group of Hebrew slaves out of Egypt and set up his covenant in the Old Testament. Moses followed God's command, handed down the Ten Commandments, and then completed his mission by bringing the Israelites to the Promised Land's edge. Just as God reassured Moses in the Old Testament, Jesus, in the same way, gave his support to be with his disciples and to increase their strength to fulfill their mandate to go and make disciples of all nations.[41]

## Jesus Christ's Promise to His Disciples

Matthew reveals in the text that he comforts his disciples while being instructed to undertake such a huge commission. Furthermore, he promises that he will be with them during their entire mission. For the reader, the first thought that may stick out in this text is how the beginning and the end of the story strategically come together. At the beginning of Matthew's gospel, the reader is first introduced to Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:23), who is called "Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14), meaning "God with us." Therefore, it is at this point that Jesus Christ's promise to his disciples is revealed.[42]

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40. Stuart K. Weber. *Holman New Testament Commentary – Matthew*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2000), 138.

41. Warren Carter. *Matthew and the Margins*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 552.

42. Wilkins, "Matthew," 191.

Furthermore, Matthew reveals that Jesus will stay with his disciples until they have implemented his command and beyond. This command supports the exegetical argument that the disciples will deliver the message to all nations without reservation.[43]

Nevertheless, there is an unspoken prerogative regarding Jesus's promise to his disciples because only the Father is eternal, which supports the expression "to the end of the age."[44] In John 14:6 and Rom. 6:23, both authors reveal the promise Jesus gave his to his disciples, which supports the Great Commission's story (Matt. 28:16–20), which has become the foundation regarding the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the good news by which God paves the way for humanity to be delivered from the penalty of sin.

## How the Concept of the Great Commission Relates to this Project

This project was designed to bring out a great assurance of accomplishing Jesus's one command, to "make disciples." Since the Greek word *μαθητής* "disciple" means "student," thus implying teaching them in one or two sentences, Jesus's actions toward his disciples mean that the lessons should be taught continuously.[45] Thus, according to Robert E. Coleman, one's fulfillment of the Great Commission should not be a choice; instead, according to Jesus's command, all believers in the body of Jesus Christ are supposed to make disciples wherever they may be or wherever they go.[46]

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43. Wilkins, "Matthew," 191.

44. Ibid.

45. Greg Herrick. "Understanding the Meaning of the Term 'disciple.'" (Bible Org. Published, 2004).

46. Robert E. Coleman. "The Lifestyle of the Great Commission." in *Telling the Truth.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 255.

Coleman explains that the Great Commission's perspective can be about one telling the truth about Jesus's command for humanity, ministering to others who are in his immediate circle, and baptizing and teaching others to see the goodness of God through Jesus's authority.[47] He argues that when someone does not obey the call of Jesus Christ to make disciples, he can be out of compliance with the command for humanity—baptizing and teaching others the gospel. He explains that believers should take this command seriously and understand the importance of doing so related to the Great Commission. Moreover, Coleman explains that one should always plan to see others as potential disciples of Jesus Christ. The command of Jesus is not to convert others but to corporately disciple all those who agree to follow Jesus.[48]

According to Coleman, one must always want to make disciples and seriously consider the Great Commission aspect by enabling others to follow. While it is not the responsibility of one person to try to disciple the entire world corporately, it can be said that every Christian should agree on the necessity of reaching out to their assigned local community and making disciples.[49] He explains that disciples are followers of Jesus Christ and not converts. Therefore, Jesus did not give his disciples instructions to convert people to join another newfound religion. Instead, as Coleman further explains, Jesus gives his disciples instructions to make disciples according to a biblical and spiritual lifestyle, just as Jesus Christ lived.[50]

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47. Coleman, "The Lifestyle of the Great Commission," 255–6.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., 256–7.

This project aims to demonstrate the Great Commission by helping a group of recently released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, reconnect with God and live productive lives in society. For the same reason, the research will now move from the Great Commission to focus on historical, spiritual writers, and seven classic spiritual disciplines.

## Historical Foundations

Several contemporary spiritual writers stood out during the research into the theoretical and historical foundations of the classic spiritual disciplines and practices. This section begins with three spiritual writers whose experiences and abilities have brought spiritual disciplines to contemporary audiences and practitioners.

### Richard J. Foster

One well-known writer is Richard J. Foster, author of several bestselling books, including *Streams of Living Water, Prayer,* and *Celebration of Discipline*. He is the founder of Renovaré, an interfaith church movement committed to the church's renewal in all her multidimensional expressions. Foster also served as principal editor of the *Renovaré Spiritual Formation Study Bible*.[51]

Although various spiritual disciplines have been practiced throughout the centuries, Foster limits his focus to twelve classic spiritual disciplines: meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship, guidance, celebration.[52] He then divides them into three groups of traditional spiritual disciplines—

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51. Richard J. Foster. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 20th ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1998), 246.

52. Ibid., iii.

inward, outward, and corporate. He explains that each of these twelve spiritual disciplines gave him a worldview perspective in which he has synthesized all his academic and biblical training.[53] The focus on the classic spiritual disciplines helps bring one into a greater appreciation of God. In addition, actions associated with these traditional, spiritual disciplines allow individuals and their communities to divert their attention to God and seek their original plan for life.[54]

Foster explains that meditation, one of the inward spiritual disciplines, is defined as one's ability to hear God's voice and obey his word.[55] He also explains that simplicity, an outward spiritual discipline, is an inward truth that results in one's external lifestyle.[56] Finally, the corporate spiritual discipline of confession allows one to be given the ability to accept the confession of sin and forgive it in Jesus's name.[57] Foster's experience has allowed him to be trusted by those who want to get a clear understanding of the historic realities associated with the spiritual disciplines.[58]

## Dallas Willard

Another spiritual writer who was well known for his practices about the spiritual disciplines was Dallas Willard. He was a college professor at the University of California's School of Philosophy. In addition, he held visiting professor appointments at

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53. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, xiii.

54. Ibid., 45.

55. Ibid., 17.

56. Ibid., 79.

57. Ibid., 146.

58. Ibid., 8.

UCLA and the University of Colorado. Willard was a Southern Baptist minister whose groundbreaking books, such as *In Search of Guidance* and *The Divine Conspiracy*, have forever changed thousands of Christians that experienced newfound spiritual practices.[59] Willard's contribution to one's understanding of the spiritual disciplines is that one should focus on one's life and the world as God's word and gift.[60] He notes that practicing spiritual disciplines is crucial to realizing one's true fellowship with God.[61]

Willard categorizes the disciplines differently than Foster, presenting the case that there is a difference between two major categories of disciplines—disciplines of engagement and abstinence disciplines. He explains that the disciplines of engagement link one to others' needs to become unified in the Spirit of God. The disciplines of separate abstinence are haste, confusion, and bustle in one's life, allowing one to relate to God exclusively.[62]

### Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

A third spiritual writer known for her practices involving specific disciplines is Adele Ahlberg Calhoun. After earning a master's degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, she was employed in Christian ministry for over forty years. Calhoun is a co-pastor with her husband, Doug, of the Redeemer Community Church in

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59. Dallas Willard. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives.* (New York, NY: Harpercollins, 1988), back cover.

60. Ibid., 179.

61. Ibid., 187.

62. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us.* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2005), 19–20.

Needham, Massachusetts. She is the author of the *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook, Invitations from God,* and co-author of *True You* and *Women and Identity*.[63]

Calhoun's contribution to the contemporary practices of the spiritual disciplines is to help readers with spiritual exercises to journey toward intimacy with Jesus Christ. With passion, she instructs people about the spiritual disciplines of fasting, solitude, and contemplative prayer called *lectio divina*.[64]

## History of the Practice of Spiritual Disciplines

This section reveals a brief history of how Christians have practiced classic spiritual disciplines as they developed through the centuries. Eras investigated were the New Testament and the early church.

### *The New Testament Era*

Calhoun makes an apologetic argument by saying, "While some authors began to write the gospels during the first century, the actions of Jesus were explained as it relates to the practice of spiritual disciplines."[65] During the New Testament era, the practice of spiritual disciplines began to spread throughout Rome rapidly, as the gospel of Jesus continued to excite one's aspirations of salvation and connection with Jesus.[66]

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63. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, back cover.

64. Ibid., 17.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

The Book of Acts

The book of Acts presents illustrations of believers practicing spiritual disciplines that helped them to stay connected with Jesus Christ (Acts. 2:42) as they devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings (deliberate practices), to fellowship (interactions), to the breaking of bread (encounters) and prayer.[67] The book of Acts also records many ways during the first century that believers created sacred spaces in their lives to be holy when they faced trying times:

*Acts 3.* Peter and John are on the scene in Acts 3, entering the Temple. At that time, they walk past a man who had been lame from birth as he is carried in. The man wanted alms from Peter and John, but Peter gave him the ability to walk instead. What a clear connection with one's discipline and the act of compassion. Gangel writes, "Some opportunities for ministry call on us to determine the real needs of the ones to whom we minister and the resources we have that will help them."[68]

*Acts 4.* chronicles the outcome of healing by Simon Peter and his preaching in Solomon's entryway. The Sanhedrin arrested the apostles, but as one witnessed their trust in God, they were eventually let go and were freed. This story illuminates one's discipline and action in witnessing the Holy Spirit's power related to the lame man being healed. In his text, Gangel prays by saying, "God, please increase our faith and courage so that, like these early believers, we may learn to pray and witness in the name and power of Jesus. Amen."[69]

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67. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 17.

68. Kenneth Gangel. *Holman New Testament Commentary – Acts.* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1998), 1197.

69. Ibid., 1806.

*Acts 7.* Stephen gave a speech in Acts 7, before the Sanhedrin, as he was executed outside of Jerusalem. He showed in his speech that he would continue to serve God no matter the obstacles in his way. The act of service can directly target one's attitude and trust in God that can be paralleled in the foundation of his life. As it relates to the act of service, Gangel explains, "Service for the Savior cannot be carried out in our strength. Only divinely empowered responses to ministry can count in any way."[70]

*Acts 3:1; 10:9.* These texts reveal the power of having a fixed hour of prayer in one's life. Act 3:1 explains the story about the healing of a lame man found at the Beautiful Gate, considered the Temple entrance by Peter and Peter's Sermon on Solomon's doorway. The apostles prayed, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the lame man was healed. Acts 10:9 explains Peter's story of him praying in solitude, and while he was praying, God gave him a command about a vessel full of animals being lowered from heaven. In his prayer, God told Peter to kill those animals and eat. This story is a good example of the positive aspect of prayer in one's life to help him hear God's commands and instructions for his life effectively. Gangel explains, "Christian courage depends upon biblical praying grounded in the sovereignty of God."[71]

*Acts 14:23.* In this text, the Apostle Paul and Barnabas began their missionary journey back to Antioch's city in Pisidia. While combining their newly planted churches along the way, they appointed elders for them in each church and instructed them to fast and pray as they committed themselves unto the Lord, whom they had supported. Therefore, this story shows how the spiritual discipline of fasting has a unique way of

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70. Gangel, *Holman New Testament Commentary - Acts*, 1238.

71. Ibid., 1684.

turning one's eye towards God without reservation. Gangel suggests, "We should not think of fasting as demonstrating greater spiritual sincerity and certainly not to impress the Lord. Like these Christians, those who practice fasting today should do so voluntarily to focus."[72]

*Acts 15.* In this text, the Apostle Paul and Barnabas traveled to Jerusalem to attend the Council of Jerusalem. They needed discernment from the Lord to help the people make wise decisions related to Jesus Christ's Gospel. Through the Apostle Paul's act of discernment, he trusts the Holy Spirit's power to help him in this matter. Therefore, when one acts out of discernment, it may become a positive way for someone to hear from God about God's ultimate plan for one's life. Gangel explains, "Important decisions affecting the life of any church must be communicated clearly if we expect people to apply them in their lives."[73]

Calhoun claims that believers who want to know God and his love support these disciplines in the book of Acts as a spiritual reality through this command. Especially as the early church community continued to be distracted by desires, tension, excitement, and oppression, they needed to develop spiritual disciplines to keep them connected to Jesus.[74]

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72. Gangel, *Holman New Testament Commentary - Acts*, 5497.

73. Ibid., 6267.

74. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 17.

## Human Transformation

As it relates to the human transformation process about the practices of spiritual discipline, Willard notes, "Spiritual disciplines take the need from human transformation as seriously as modern revolutionary movements during the New Testament era."[75] In the process of human transformation, this may cause one to receive others' support. The practice of the spiritual disciplines was intended for one to learn to serve and not be served. Therefore, spiritual disciplines may be practiced in local church settings while volunteering for charitable organizations or instinctively in individual scenes, which support the concept of human transformation related to one's ongoing practice of spiritual disciplines.[76]

## The Creation of New Believers

The practice of spiritual disciplines can help to create new believes in the faith. Since the New Testament era shows specific periods and sets of protocols to develop new believers related explicitly to spiritual disciplines, it also offers several appeals and storylines on creating new believers in Jesus Christ through spiritual disciplines.[77]

The creation of new believers can be done through one's lifestyle change. Therefore, it can become common for one to support spiritual disciplines because of the positive effects in one's life. Thus, the practice of spiritual disciplines can be an excellent way of supporting the fundamental aspect associated with creating new believers.

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75. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, ix.

76. Ibid.,181.

77. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 17.

Furthermore, the practice of spiritual disciplines can also enhance one's continued walk with Jesus Christ, which can help fulfill the original plan that God has for one's life.[78]

## Spiritual Formation

When one practices spiritual disciplines, those actions can also support spiritual formation, which suggests that all believers should consider whenever they decide to practice spiritual disciplines.[79] Willard elucidates that the practice of spiritual disciplines and spiritual formation presents a way of living that allows regular people to join with God and realize their highest ambitions of well-being and doing. Therefore, the key to this self-transformation in one's general spiritual discipline is in line with spiritual formation.[80]

The practice of the spiritual disciplines can allow believers to follow Jesus, helping them learn how to serve others. These actions can increasingly resemble the movement of Jesus Christ in character by following him in one's overall way of living. Willard supports his claims by the command Jesus gave his disciples.[81] He writes, "Many Christians were suddenly prepared to look at traditional methods of spiritual formation. Instead, they could not help but see that spiritual growth and vitality stem from what we do with our lives, from the habits we form, and from the character that results."[82]

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78. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines,* 182.

79. Ibid., 183–4.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

## The Great Commission

The practice of the spiritual disciplines supports the story of the Great Commission, which stemmed from Jesus's command to disciples in Matt. 28:19–20. In the Great Commission's account, Jesus's actions demonstrated his authority to command his disciples to go preaching the gospel and baptizing new believers. Thus, his teachings can apply to the practice of spiritual disciplines because they can reinforce one's faith in the gospel of Jesus.[83] Furthermore, no matter how hard or how many times someone may have messed up his life, one can begin life again by trusting the gospel of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit with the practice of spiritual disciplines.[84] The following section moves into the early church era of spiritual disciplines and practices.

### *The Era of the Early Church*

During the beginning years of the early church, believers had wanted to develop healthier relationships with God through deliberate practices, interactions, and encounters that gave them room in their lives to stay connected with Jesus. These intentional practices, exchanges, and meetings are known as "spiritual disciplines."[85] Furthermore, the *Didache* gives believers instructions on increasing their love for God and their neighbors. The *Didache* also focuses on the spiritual disciplines of stewardship, chastity, fasting, prayer, humility, and even the Lord's Supper practices.[86]

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83. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 17.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid.

Throughout the early church era, the practice of the spiritual disciplines had been confirmed, and people have seen their actions become extremely helpful to their lives. Therefore, in looking at a historical foundation in this matter, the practice of the spiritual disciplines has remained faithful to the theoretical teachings on this subject. According to Luke J. Wilson, this process has not deviated from one's spiritual discipline in Christian ministry. While spiritual disciplines are determinative for understanding and applying those disciplines in life, one's actions have that role.[87]

The practice of the spiritual disciplines helps to support some of today's controversial and combative moments. In addition, these practices set examples for new believers to follow. Furthermore, these practices can help fulfill God's original plan for one's life.[88] This is why it became customary to learn about the spiritual disciplines during the early church era. Wilson argues that these teachings carried great weight in the early church, as they gave people in the church a chance to develop a healthier relationship with God.[89]

As time passed during the early church era, some churches focused on specific spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, and meditation, accompanied by faith in God, trusting him more. Therefore, through these actions, one could better understand the

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87. Luke J. Wilson. "Spiritual Disciplines of the Early Church: Ancient Practices for the 21st Century." That Ancient Faith, last modified June 17, 2019, https://www.thatancientfaith.uk/home/perma/1560767520/article/spiritual-disciplines-of-the-early-church.html.

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid., 3–4.

spiritual disciplines' concepts through their specific practices, supporting how the New Testament era related to spiritual disciplines.[90]

The next section of this chapter will reveal seven specific spiritual disciplines that the project employed to lead a group of newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit to reconnect with God and live productive lives in society.

## A Focus on Seven Specific Spiritual Disciplines

As it relates to Matt 28:16–20 and the actions of Jesus teaching the disciples to observe his command, Matthew develops specific gospel disciplines that Jesus teaches his disciples. Thus, the acts of Jesus and his disciples could include but are not limited to meditation, prayer, study, submission, service, confession, and worship, which parallel the list from Foster's book, *Celebration of Discipline*.[91] Therefore, part of realizing this teaching to observe all that Jesus commanded includes the disciples reproducing themselves with disciples who would engage these same disciplines.

Due to a communicative relationship with some of the newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit about their current situations, the following seven spiritual disciplines were chosen to help the overcomers reconnect with God and live productive lives in society.

### *Meditation*

Foster explains that meditation's spiritual discipline is an inward discipline that focuses on one's intimate relationship with God. He also notes that biblical authors were

90. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline,* 15.

91. Ibid.

well-versed in practicing the spiritual discipline of meditation.[92] Foster suggests that some canon authors used two different Hebrew words to convey the idea of meditation to help one understand how important the practice of meditation is in one's life.

The meditation method should primarily focus on listening to God's word, reflecting on his works, studying his achievements, and reflecting on his plan for humanity.[93] Willard notes, "The hiding of the law in the heart and constant meditation upon it is as anyone who has done it will know not separable from a certain use of the body"[94] Moreover when meditating, one allows changes to behavior because of this encounter with God. The spiritual discipline of mediation brings one into repentance and obedience to God.

The psalmist wrote, "Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all day" (Ps. 119:97). In Ps. 119:101-102, the psalmist writes, "I keep my feet from the ways of evil, to keep thy word. I do not turn aside from thy decrees, for thou hast taught me." Furthermore, through this action, one can focus on obedience and faithfulness, clearly defining Christian meditation with God from other forms of meditation.[95]

Foster infers that meditation is also the ability for someone to hear God's voice and obey his word. When practicing the spiritual discipline of meditation, one communes with the spiritual nature of God. As he inscribes, "Meditation requires mental and physical punishment on one's part without allowing himself to be distracted."[96]

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92. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline,* 15.

93. Ibid.

94. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines,* 149.

95. Ibid.

96. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline,* 15.

He also explains that the practices associated with the spiritual discipline of meditation involve no hidden obscurities, no secret chants, no mental calisthenics, and no abstruse trips into the galactic belief. Instead, the spiritual discipline of meditation creates boundaries one needs to help one stay connected with God.[97]

Finally, he suggests that meditation can go far beyond one briefly detaching from the world. Although there is a need to separate oneself from the world, one must keep a communication level in one's surroundings to keep self in line in any current situation. It is a misconception that the spiritual practice of meditation is too difficult or too complicated.[98]

Calhoun suggests, "Meditation runs counter to our busy culture where speed reading, first impressions, and skimming are as deep as we go."[99] In contrast, while strengthening one's relationship with Jesus, meditation's continued practice becomes more comfortable. Christian meditation practices can be straightforward if one truly is ready to change his life for the better and have a desire to help change other lives for the better to advance the kingdom of God.[100]

*Prayer*

Throughout the centuries and within the early church, the practice of prayer propelled disciples into activating the primary foundation of their spiritual natures. Of all

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97. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline,* 15.

98. Ibid.,15–16.

99. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 173.

100. Ibid.

spiritual disciplines, prayer has been the most pivotal spiritual discipline because this discipline is considered an inward field that guides one into continual intimacy with God.[101]

The spiritual discipline of prayer can bring one into the most significant and ultimate work within spiritual formation. Therefore, one's prayer life should be a daily practice. Furthermore, when one prays regularly, it creates a root of all personal godliness in one's life.[102] Calhoun writes, "The spiritual discipline of prayer provides pattens for one attending to God throughout the day."[103]

Therefore, when beginning to pray, the thought becomes present to change something in one's life for the better. The spiritual practice of prayer is considered an inward discipline, the primary method of communing with God. When developing a sincere communicative relationship with God, a transformation occurs.[104]

Furthermore, Willard claims, "The same law of indirect preparedness rules all human existence, from playing the flute to intercessory prayer."[105] Moreover, if one is unwilling to change, one will forsake the practice of prayer, which can negatively affect life. In contrast, the closer one comes in line with God; the more one will see and stay connected to him and desire to be conformed to Jesus Christ. Therefore, one should focus

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101. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline,* 33.

102. Ibid.

103. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 173.

104. Ibid.

105. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 152.

on learning to embrace God's unconditional love because, when life happens, distractions may interfere with spiritual awareness.[106]

Nevertheless, when one prays, God slowly but surely reveals himself and reactivates any lost communication that may have happened. For instance, in Rom. 12:2, the Apostle Paul tried to help Jewish Christians understand their new relationships with Gentile Christians through Christ. He admonishes his readers by writing, "Do not follow the patterns of this world but be changed by the revitalizing of your mind. Then you will be able to assess and approve what God's will is his good, pleasing and perfect will." Likewise, R. C. Sproul writes, "Transformation happens for this purpose: that you may prove what that good and acceptable and perfect will of God is."[107]

When someone has a spiritual walk with God, they may use the spiritual discipline of prayer as a line of communication with God. For example, in Mk. 1:35, the author writes, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." Sproul suggests, "He did this so He could distance Himself from the pressing crowd and go to a solitary place to refresh Himself by prayer."[108]

King David also was an advocate of prayer. Throughout his life, he realized that there is power using the spiritual discipline of prayer. In Ps. 63:1 (KJV), he prays, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsted for thee, my flesh longeth

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106. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 152.

107. Robert C. Sproul. *Romans: An Expositional Commentary.* (Ligonier Ct, Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2019), 377.

108. R. C. Sproul. *Mark: An Expositional Commentary*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2019), 31.

for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." In this prayer, Willem A. VanGemeren explains, "This psalm reflects the genre of individual laments, with its characteristic complaint, expression of confidence in the Lord's ability to help, and anticipation of public praise."[109]

According to Acts 6:4, Luke explains that when some of the apostles were persuaded to invest their strengths in other important and necessary tasks other than complete God's mission, they decided that the spiritual discipline of prayer critically completed the assignment for God by inferring, "We will give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word." Gangel suggests, "The prayer assumes dependence and faith. In the text, these believers (apostles) expected to do nothing by themselves; everything rested in the sovereign power of God and the name of Jesus."[110]

*Study*

The spiritual discipline of study requires one to pay careful attention to the mind's reality, enabling one to move his life in a specific direction. Foster recognizes, "The spiritual discipline of study is another inward discipline that helps one take on thoughts that can lead to his overall spiritual growth."[111] He argues, "When one sees a tree or reads a book, he can see it, understand it, and draw conclusions. However, one's thoughts can take on many different understandings that can cause him to make a wrong decision if his studying actions have been broken."[112]

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109. Willem A. VanGemeren. *Psalms: The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic Publishing, 2008), 488.

110. Gangel, *Holman New Testament Commentary–Acts*, 1727.

111. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 63.

112. Ibid.

Therefore, Foster adds, "When one truly practices the spiritual discipline of study, awareness, assessment, reverberation, entrenched habits of positive thoughts are formed."[113] For example, in Deut. 6:8, the author writes, "Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads." Foster infers that these instructions were given to the Israelites to write the Laws of the land on gates, doorposts and bind them to their wrists so that they shall appear as frontals between your eyes.[114] He then suggests, "Study is a specific kind of experience in which the mind is enabled to move in a certain direction through careful attention to reality."[115] Willard writes,

> When one practices the spiritual discipline of study, he begins to focus on Christ's power which can enter in his life in many ways through the sense of forgiveness and his love for God by also using the spiritual discipline of solitude. Here is the chief positive counterpart of solitude, as solitude is the primary discipline of abstinence for the early part of our spiritual life. Therefore, the spiritual discipline of study is also the primary discipline of engagement.[116]

The spiritual discipline of study can be a form of practice that can introduce someone to the spiritual practices, relationships, and experiences that can help them mature in their faith. Calhoun suggests, "The spiritual discipline of study can help one learn the concept of *lectio*, book discussions, varieties of prayer, lifestyle choices, mentoring in service, stewardship, hospitality, self-care, and witness."[117]

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113. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 63.

114. Ibid.

115. Ibid.

116. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 176.

117. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 135–6.

*Submission*

According to Foster, the spiritual discipline of submission is considered an outward discipline as it allows one to have consistent freedom in life. Even so, he explains, "You can quickly see that the spiritual disciplines of submission, service, and guidance deal with the question of place in one's life."[118]

Setting up freedom in life gives one the ability to create more precise decisions. Foster infers, "In submission, we recognize the legitimate authority of others over us. It is nothing more than the simple understanding that no man is an island. Therefore, community life is our rightful home: relationship with other human beings is our inheritance."[119]

Calhoun suggests, "The spiritual discipline of submission that leads to growth means aligning my will and freedom with God's will and freedom. God's will for us includes freely submitting to each other out of love and reverence for Jesus Christ."[120] Moreover, she explains that teachings about the spiritual discipline of submission primarily focus on one's spirit and others beyond oneself.[121]

Foster argues that the spiritual discipline of submission means being willing to obey Jesus Christ's commands voluntarily. He writes, "To confess our commitment to community means to confess our commitment to mutual subordination."[122] He explains

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Richard J. Foster. *Richard J. Foster's Study Guide for "Celebration of Discipline"* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2010), 164.

119. Ibid.

120. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 118.

121. Ibid.

122. Foster, *Richard J. Foster's Study Guide*, 164.

that the spiritual discipline of submission means that Jesus is in authority as one agrees to commit to yield will, mind, and body for God's purposes to better hear, receive, and obey the will of the Lord's Word. He adds,

> The spiritual discipline of submission is a concept as broad as life itself and a Discipline found throughout Scripture. It raises profound and complex issues matters of submission to the conducts of God, topics of submission to the state, topics of submission to the Christian fellowship, issues of submission in the Christian household, and much more.[123]

The spiritual discipline of submission is also supported by the Old Testament account of Jacob's wrestling with an angel in Gen. 32:24–29. Sproul writes, "After they had wrestled all night, Jacob demanded a blessing, which prompted the angel to ask his name. Jacob asked the angel's name when the angel blessed him, but he would not give it. Revealing one's name to an adversary was an act of submission."[124]

Calhoun affirms, "The spiritual discipline of submission is to have Jesus as the Master of my life in absolutely every way."[125] Therefore, the spiritual discipline of submission is a moral theme that flows through the scope of one's actions to live a life just like Jesus lived but not because one is in a particular place or stage in life.

*Service*

Foster considers the spiritual discipline of service another outward discipline because it shows one's desire to serve others. He explains, "The spiritual discipline of service banishes one to the humdrum, the ordinary, and the inconsequential related to

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123. Foster, *Richard J. Foster's Study Guide*, 164.

124. Sproul, *Mark: An Expositional Commentary*, 681.

125. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 117.

serving others."[126] He also suggests that in the spiritual discipline of service, one has excellent liberty to help others better themselves. He infers, "The spiritual discipline of service enables one to say 'no' to his desires and say, 'yes' to help others reconnect with God."[127]

Willard explains that there are many opportunities for service that exist right in one's neighborhood. Therefore, one can consider serving one's neighbor by showing an act of kindness, such as helping those who may be in need. In addition, he suggests, "The spiritual discipline of service allows one to aid others who may help with their spiritual walk with Jesus."[128]

*Confession*

Foster argues that the spiritual discipline of confession is a corporate discipline that can be invoked when trusted people know their most profound weaknesses or failures. He infers, "One of the best ways to receive grace and mercy from others is through the spiritual discipline of confession. The way one can deal with his sins through the spiritual discipline of confession."[129] The Apostle Paul confirms, "If one confesses with his mouth, the Lord Jesus and believe in his heart that God has resurrected Jesus from the dead, he will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). Moreover, Gangel inscribes, "The Apostle Paul conjoins two elements here. First, he does not just say that you must confess with your lips and profess with your mouth to be saved. Second, every Christian is called to

126. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 127.

127. Ibid.

128. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 182.

129. Foster, *Richard J. Foster's Study Guide,* 59.

profess their faith. We are to profess the faith, but the profession without authentic faith attending it will justify no one."[130]

Foster infers that a considerable part of confession can be one's actions of forgiveness. In other words, God does the forgiving, but he often chooses human beings as the channel of his forgiving grace.[131] He explains that since the spiritual discipline of confession can take a significant amount of time, it can be an essential part of one's actions. He exhorts, "When one practices the spiritual discipline of confession, it helps one heal from his sins and bring those sins into the light. Therefore, the best way to bring evil into the light is through the spiritual discipline of confession."[132]

The spiritual discipline of confession allows one to surrender weaknesses and faults to the forgiving life of Jesus Christ and intentionally wish and embrace practices that lead to transformation. Calhoun explains that if one should practice the spiritual discipline of confession, one should practice it safely.[133]

Self-examination can be the process whereby the Holy Spirit supports the practice of the spiritual discipline of confession. In this matter, Calhoun suggests that this practice allows one to open to God with the safety of his love to seek self-transformation authentically.[134] So likewise, Foster infers that the spiritual discipline of confession will

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130. Sproul, *Romans: An Expositional Commentary*, 316.

131. Foster, *Richard J. Foster's Study Guide,* 59.

132. Ibid.

133. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 90.

134. Ibid., 90.

enable one to embrace Jesus Christ's gift of forgiveness and restoration while setting out on the path to renewal and change.[135]

*Worship*

The discipline of worship is considered a corporate discipline of worship that means one is in the act of experiencing God. Foster notes,

> When one practices the spiritual discipline of worship, he shows who God is, which does not necessarily mean listening to music's sound, focusing on his emotions or feelings. Nevertheless, the spiritual disciple of worship gives God honor and glory through one's mental and physical actions in nature.[136]

Calhoun infers that when practicing the spiritual discipline of worship, one falls into the arms of God and says, "Have your way in me."[137] In this process, one begins to recognize that God is approachable. One's act of worship prompts an approach to God with consistency. Willard suggests,

> When one practices the spiritual discipline of worship, he comes through the interaction of his powers, a bodily being with God. Therefore, as one has a bodily being with God, they will have the health and wholeness appropriate to him when he worships God and draws upon the spiritual realm that encompasses and underlies him along with the rest of creation.[138]

Foster explains that it may be challenging to think of worship as a discipline since there is a misunderstanding that worshiping God means playing music and singing, which seems to have been a myth for years.[139] Nevertheless, he counters, "The spiritual

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135. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 90–1.

136. Foster, *Richard J. Foster's Study Guide,* 138.

137. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 26.

138. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 76,

139. Foster, *Richard J. Foster's Study Guide,* 138.

discipline of worship is much more than just music and songs. The spiritual discipline of worship can also include prayer, silence, reading, dancing, clapping, and other praise and adoration expressions towards God. Furthermore, the spiritual discipline of worship can also be a cleansing experience for someone."[140]

Foster suggests that when practicing the spiritual discipline of worship, one begins to engage with, swell upon, and express God's greatness, beauty, and goodness through words, rituals, and symbols. Willard explains, however, that the spiritual discipline of worship can also become one of the most intensely apologetic arguments in one's life because of the tensions on how others worship God. Therefore, it is also vital to move beyond a view of worship to reflect generational styles or cultural experiences.[141]

Willard adds that to worship God truly is to experience who God is and uniquely touch a life. Therefore, when practicing the spiritual discipline of worship, one can know, feel, and share the spiritually resurrected Christ amid one's current location. He inscribes, "The spiritual discipline of worship is considered a human response to the divine initiative of God. The spiritual discipline of worship is one responding to the overtures of love from the heart of God."[142]

Foster advocates that the spiritual discipline of worship can be ignited when only the Holy Spirit of God touches one's heart and soul. Therefore, one can use the concept of worship in activities like sports, music, art, movies, and celebrities. Furthermore, he proposes that while spending quality time practicing the spiritual discipline of worship,

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140. Foster, *Richard J. Foster's Study Guide,* 139.

141. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 177.

142. Ibid.

one may begin to look to move beyond the general concept of worship as it has been known before. Therefore, one may begin to understand that God and God alone should be the foundation of his worship.[143]

The research chapter will move from the theoretical and historical foundations to the project's practical foundations, focusing on the concepts of missional living and mental models.

## Practical Foundations

### Missional Living

The concept of missional living is essential to this project's practical foundations. It supports one who wants to reconnect with God and live a productive life in society using missional living actions. Accordingly, Craig Van Gelder and Dwight Zscheile name the following shared aims in understanding missional living:

- God is considered a missionary God who directs the church (believers) into the world.
- The mission in the world is associated with the reign in the kingdom of God.
- The missional church is an incarnational ministry designed to engage a postmodern, post-Christendom, globalized ministry context.
- The missional church's inner life is created to focus on every believer living as a disciple of Jesus Christ and is fully engaged in mission.[144]

143. Foster, *Richard J. Foster's Study Guide,* 139.

144. Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile. *The Missional Church in Perspective (The Missional Network): Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation.* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 3–4.

Moreover, Reggie McNeal explains that missional living is a way of life and should not be interrupted by affiliation or activity.[145] The idea of missional living should not be believed to be a program, or a strategy implemented in church or ministry in hopes of predetermined results. Van Gelder and Zscheile suggest that the key for someone to be missional is to develop one's ability to hear God's word, follow the Holy Spirit's direction, and listen to others in love.[146]

According to Geoffrey Wainwright, missional life can be experienced anywhere. So, in Matt. 28:19, the author suggested that when Jesus commanded "go and make" disciples, the missional concept meant global missional living.[147]

## Lesslie Newbigin

One of the greatest influencers, a British missionary, missiologist, and theologian in missional living, was James Edward Lesslie Newbigin (December 8, 1909–January 30, 1998).[148] He was ordained as a minister in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1936 and spent most of his entire life as a missionary throughout India. His outreach ministry primarily focused on the theology of missiology and ecclesiology. Wainwright enlightens that scholars believe Newbigin's work and ministry actions laid the practical foundations for the contemporary missional church movement.[149]

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145. Reggie McNeal. *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church.* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), xiv.

146. Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective,* 165.

147. Geoffrey Wainwright. *Lesslie Newbigin: A Theological Life.* (New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press. 2000), v.

148. Ibid.

149. Ibid.

Newbigin's work led people to rethink the relationship between church and mission-related to missional living. By rattling the core of the church's understanding of the missional concept, Newbigin suggested that the gospel of Jesus Christ does not depict a mission where the church is considered a sender of missionaries from specific locations.[150]

Newbigin's missional aspect of living is considered a Christian body of believers created and led by the Holy Spirit within their own cultures. It was this understanding that formed the early practical foundation for what would become the missional movement.[151] His philosophy of missional living is in context with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Therefore, someone's actions can expand to include another part of the missional movement, extending beyond the church and into the world. Thus, the connection of missional living with the Trinity's doctrine and the image of taking part with God in his mission formed an essential invention in the church.[152] A reflection on the practical foundations of missional living includes both theological and ecclesiological changes, which come from Newbigin's debate at the Willingen conference, about which David Bosch writes, "God's salvific work precedes both the church and mission. Therefore, we should not subordinate the mission to the church nor the church to mission; both should, instead, be taken up into the *missio Dei,* which now became the overarching concept. The *missio Dei* institutes the *missiones ecclesia.*[153]

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150. Paul Weston. *Lesslie Newbigin: Missionary Theologian: A Reader*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 1, 6.

151. Ibid. 6, 12.

152. Ibid.

153. David Bosch. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 370.

Furthermore, following the Willingen conference, there seemed to be a clear transition from viewing the church as having a mission (or missions) to viewing God as a missionary God, who sent his Son Jesus, who calls the church to take part in God's mission.[154] In Newbigin's idea of missional, the way the church impacts society should be the in the way in which Christians live. Therefore, Christians who live out their faith are considered a "hermeneutic of the gospel."[155] In the continued research of missional concepts related to Newbigin's work, he indeed had laid the foundation upon which one can continue to push the missional-church movement forward.[156]

Thus, by following Jesus's instructions found in Matt. 28:18–20, one can believe that the concept of missional living supports these instructions. Importantly, they helped the assigned and recently released inmates at Jester III Prison Unit reconnect with God and live productive lives in a society affiliated with SFRR. Thus, they were enabled to continue the mission that Jesus assigned his disciples to fulfill.

## Mental Models

The continued practice and concept of mental models were essential to the practical foundations of this project because the minds of the assigned and or recently released inmates needed to change as a first step.

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154. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*., 390. Cf. Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 183, n.9.

155. Lesslie Newbigin. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 222–33.

156. Ibid.

Peter M. Senge explains that the concept of mental models is the reason for how something works. “Mental models can be considered a framework or worldview that one carries around in one’s mind to help decipher the world and understand the relationship between things. Thus, mental models are deeply held in one’s own belief about how the world works.”[157]

Senge suggests that the foundation for mental models comes from understanding one’s family of origin, which supports how one sees the world around oneself. Therefore, the only way to change one’s mind about something is based on one’s current mental model.[158]

Natalie A. Jones argues that mental models are assembled by individuals who base their lives on their unique life experiences, feelings, and understandings. Mental models are used to help one make life decisions and can be found in inappropriate behaviors. Mental models supply the method through which current information is filtered and stored in one’s mind.[159] She explains that the construction of mental models provides practical reasoning to explore the intellectual dimension of one’s interactions with others. Mental models comprise perceptive thinking, an external reality that one uses as the basis for acting with and within the confines of one’s mind and decisions.[160]

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157. Peter M. Senge. “Mental Models,” in *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization.* (New York, NY: Crown Business, 2006), 8.

158. Ibid.

159. Natalie A. Jones, Helen Ross, Timothy Lynam, Pascal Perez, and Anne Leitch. “Mental models: an interdisciplinary synthesis of theory and methods.” *Ecology and Society* 16, no. 1 (2011), 1-13.

160. Ibid.

Without a change in one's thought processes, one's actions cannot be changed or accepted. One's current living standards are significantly defined by the beliefs of current surroundings. Therefore, any data in the real world that is not in line with one's current life standards will clash with the current mental belief system.[161]

Joel Arthur Barker infers that the practice of mental models in the church or ministry works the same way as with the mental models in a person. He explains that churches and ministries have become rooted and grounded to practice what they have previously taught to do in ministry over the years. Therefore, any deviation from this matter would be considered unacceptable.[162]

Thus, the concept of mental models was implemented with a group of newly released inmates at Jester III Prison Unit to reconnect with God and live productive lives in a society affiliated with SFRR. The participants first needed to learn their current mindsets related to their understanding of God and what that meant to them related to a reconnection process. Furthermore, to help the individuals move forward, the project's curriculum comprised seven specific spiritual disciplines, provided instruction about the Great Commission, and demonstrated the concepts of missional living and mental models in the hope that, upon the completion of the project curriculum, participants would change their minds, want to reconnect with God, and live productive lives in a society.

The next chapter focuses on the project's actions, involving specific activities conducted with the assigned group of newly released inmates at Jester III Prison Unit.

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161. Joel Arthur Barker. *Future Edge: Discovering the New Paradigms of Success.* (New York: W. Morrow, 1992), 86.

162. Ibid.

# Chapter III

## Action

In June 2020, the seven-month project began, which involved preparation, discussion, and training. The project's purpose was to lead a group of newly released inmates from TDCJ's Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, to reconnect with God and live productive lives using seven classical spiritual disciplines.

More than forty newly released inmates, also known as overcomers, were invited to participate in the project. The invitations were sent by way of personal contact, phone calls, text messages, and the use of all current social media platforms. The project primarily targeted newly released male overcomers. In addition, those invited to participate in the project came from various ethnic and a variety of Christian denominational backgrounds, such as, but not limited to, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, and Evangelical.

The project started in June 2020 with twenty overcomers meeting in Houston and surrounding areas each week for about two hours on Saturday mornings. The bi-weekly meeting locations varied due to the availability and participation of each overcomer. Therefore, social media platforms, current video, and audio online conferencing outlets became the primary meeting locations for the project to be consistently implemented bi-weekly.

During the first session of the project, it was explained to the overcomers how the project would help each participant. Then, their questions, comments, concerns were answered, discussing suggestions, and explaining the commitment needed to complete the project. As a result, each participant, who attended the first session of the project, agreed to finish the seven-month project.

The project's curriculum was explained throughout the first session by introducing seven classic spiritual disciplines: meditation, prayer, study, submission, service, confession, and worship. Next, each participant signed a consent form to take part in the project. It was agreed not to track their identity but only their attendance and participation data, including the results from the assessments, surveys, and project curriculum assignments. Therefore, their identity would not be revealed or made public.

Personal assessment surveys were given to each participant concerning their current unique perspectives of God and their current relationships with Jesus Christ when the project began and ended. Each participant completed all bi-weekly assignments, surveys, and assessments throughout the project. Each project curriculum assignment, survey, and assessment included, but was not limited to, the assigned reading, research, and bi-weekly demonstrations in the project.

Furthermore, online assessments were given to each participant about their current mental and spiritual status. Invitations were also sent to each using online websites such as Cascade Behavioral Health and Spiritual Discipline Assessment. Finally, a collection of the results of these surveys and assessments was tallied.

Regarding the personal assessment surveys, questions were asked in the study, such as the following:

- What do you know about God?
- What does God mean to you?
- What do you know about Jesus Christ?
- What does Jesus Christ mean to you?

These questions were asked to confirm their current knowledge and understanding of God and Jesus Christ from their perspectives. Furthermore, a quantitative research assessment was given to each participant throughout the project to calculate how many would complete each assigned evaluation and project curriculum assignments related to the specific spiritual discipline discussed. This was done to help gauge how many of them would actually reconnect with God and want to live productive lives in society.

Each project session was scheduled to meet bi-weekly over seven months, from June 2020 through January 2021. Each meeting lasted about two hours, with the teaching and training presented in a conversational and discussion format. Using these communicative formats in the project allowed adequate feedback from each participant during each discussion of the readings, researched information, and bi-weekly demonstrations. Added time was given to each participant who fell behind on completing the required assigned surveys, assessments, and project curriculum assignments.

The first session allowed participants to share their personal stories to help them become acquainted with each other. It was good to see that it was a diverse group from all age groups and other demographics. Some of the participants were young and new to the faith; others had been connected to the faith for many years but felt that they were currently disconnected from God.

A few participants knew each other from their earlier time being incarcerated in prison. Others were new, shy, and did not want to speak, but they felt comfortable sharing their personal stories over time, taking part, and attending the project. They all came with a mindset and attitude to take part in the project. Also, they all agreed that somehow, they were currently disconnected from God and had not had a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ.

### Sessions 1 and 2: Spiritual Discipline of Meditation

In the first and second sessions of the project, specific attention was given to the classic spiritual discipline of meditation. Explanations were given concerning the definition of meditation and a list of biblical resources, e-books, handouts, and online internet support. Using Richard Foster's book, *Celebration of Discipline*, the spiritual discipline of meditation was described as an inward discipline that focuses on one's intimate relationship with God, leading someone to a positive life-changing experience.[1]

The first and second sessions of the project also focused on how the spiritual discipline of meditation could relate to each participant during the project discussion process. The group learned that the spiritual discipline of meditation is considered a creation of emotional and spiritual space for God in one's life. In addition, the discussion allowed each participant to see that, in the Christian tradition, the spiritual discipline of meditation could be the filling of oneself with holy thoughts.

The participants learned that intentionally giving their time and energy to God consistently allowed each of them to see their purposeful act of love, worship, and

1. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline,* 15.

devotion towards him. Sessions one and two of the project also discussed that the spiritual discipline of meditation is nothing less than the holy and revitalizing rest in God.

Finally, in these sessions, the biblical references for the spiritual discipline of meditation were presented. The first was found in Gen. 24:63 when Isaac "went out to the field one evening to meditate." Also, in Ps. 119:15, David said, "I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways." The participants were also encouraged to read Jos. 1:8 to help them create space in their lives to meditate "day and night" on the word of the Lord.

### Sessions 3 and 4: Spiritual Discipline of Prayer

The third and fourth sessions of the project focused on the classic spiritual discipline of prayer. Explanations were given concerning the definition of prayer and a list of biblical resources, e-books, hand-outs, and online internet support. Dallas Willard's book entitled *The Spirit of The Disciplines* was used, in which he said,

> Moreover, prayer will not be established in our lives as it must be for us to flourish unless we practice other disciplines such as solitude and fasting. Nevertheless, unfortunately, in many Protestant churches, prayer and Bible study are held up as activities that will make us spiritually rich. Nonetheless, very few people succeed in attaining spiritual richness through them and often find them intolerably burdensome.[2]

The participants were taught that one should pray to express the depth of one's daily need for God. Therefore, the conviction every day in prayer should be to know that one can do nothing without Jesus in one's life. These sessions explained that the spiritual discipline of prayer is considered the intersection between one's complete inadequacy to live out the Christian life on one's own and God's total adequacy to give everything

2. Willard, *The Spirit of The Disciplines*, 186.

needed as his child so that God might live in and through one. Furthermore, each participant learned that there is no activity in the life of a Christian that does not require a prayerful attitude, mindset, and prayerful dependence on God to do that which one cannot do for oneself.

Sessions three and four also discussed having the continuous need for God's grace, power, and provision for everything one does in daily living. The participants were taught that the spiritual discipline of prayer should not be about just a call for one to pray. Instead, it is always about a need to continual, moment-by-moment prayerful dependence on God, which should become one's lifestyle.

Finally, the participants were also taught to pray to experience the Holy Spirit's power and be used by God for his glory. It was explained that the Bible could be used to help one learn how to pray effectively. Also discussed was that God ordained the spiritual discipline of prayer as a means by which believers could participate with God in his purposes in the world.

### Sessions 5 and 6: Spiritual Discipline of Study

The fifth and sixth sessions of the project focused on the classic spiritual discipline of study. Explanations were given concerning the study's definition and a list of biblical resources, e-books, hand-outs, and online internet support. These sessions also used Dallas Willard's book, *The Spirit of The Disciplines*, in which he argued, "As solitude is the primary discipline of abstinence for the early part of our spiritual life, so the study is the primary discipline of engagement."[3]

3. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 176.

In these sessions, the participants were taught that the spiritual discipline of study involved more than simply reading and that the difference in studying goes beyond what one reads. Thus, just because one reads the Bible does not mean that one has studied what has been read. The participants were also taught that the spiritual discipline of studying is different from reading regarding the degree of deliberation and immersion. The spiritual discipline of study includes what one can effectively explain from the current information read. Therefore, the concept of reading is about one's breadth, while the spiritual discipline of study is about one's spiritual and mental depth.

The overcomers learned that when they practice the spiritual discipline of study, they begin to put themselves in a position to hear from God tangibly. The spiritual discipline of study can be considered the essential discipline of reading. The spiritual discipline of study is not a time to practice skimming through pages of assigned readings. Still, it requires one's commitment to change one's life for the better by regularly practicing the spiritual discipline of study.

The discussions in these sessions argued that the spiritual discipline of study involved the practices typical of any research parallel with uniquely meditative practices. The spiritual discipline of study can be considered a critical analysis, and contemplation works together to dive deeper into the assigned reading text. Therefore, through these actions, one can search, pull forth insights of assigned reading, meditate, and allow one's efforts to become personalized and internalized.

Finally, the participants were taught that the spiritual discipline of study could transform a person into a new being with God. This consistent practice can help one replace old destructive habits of thought with new life-giving habits of positive thinking.

## Sessions 7 and 8: Spiritual Discipline of Submission

The seventh and eighth sessions of the project focused on the classic spiritual discipline of submission. Explanations were given concerning the definition of submission and a list of biblical resources, e-books, hand-outs, and online internet support. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun's book, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*, was used, in which she argued, "The spiritual discipline of submission that leads to growth means aligning my will and freedom with God's will and freedom. God's will for us includes freely submitting to each other out of love and reverence for Jesus Christ."[4]

In these sessions, the participants were taught that the spiritual discipline of submission could be considered a sacred act rooted in God's good and loving intentions for everyone. Furthermore, biblical submission does not rob one of freedom but instead puts him in a position to focus only on God for entirely positive, life-changing directions. The participants learned that the spiritual discipline of submission could be a way one can allow God's kingdom plan to shape life choices and relationships with others. Therefore, the spiritual discipline of submission can always work in conjunction with personal freedom.

Furthermore, the participants were taught to emphasize imitating Jesus individually by practicing the spiritual discipline of submission corporally. Therefore, by practicing the spiritual discipline of submission, one could nurture relationships within the family of God that would promote healthy guidance in life.

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4. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 118.

The participants learned that the practice of submission is when one engages in the experience of those in their fellowship (church or ministry) who are qualified to direct their efforts in growth. Participants also learned to add the weight of their wisdom, willing spirits, and helping them do the things they would like to do would help them refrain from the things they do not want to do.

Finally, the participants learned that the primary meaning of both "subject" and "submit" is subordination, which means one is placed under control or authority. Therefore, the concept of subordination can be either voluntary or enforced. Nevertheless, the participants learned that God gives one free will to submit to him voluntarily and without forcing. Therefore, one then sets oneself up for a positive life-changing experience by surrendering to God.

### Sessions 9 and 10: Spiritual Discipline of Service

The ninth and tenth sessions of the project focused on the classic spiritual discipline of service. Explanations were given concerning the definition of service and a list of biblical resources, e-books, hand-outs, and online internet support. Again, using Richard J. Foster's book, *Celebration of Discipline*, the participants learned that the spiritual discipline of service is considered an outward discipline because it shows one's desire to serve others. Foster explains,

> The spiritual discipline of service banishes one to the humdrum, the ordinary, and the inconsequential of serving others. In the spiritual discipline of service, one has excellent liberty to help others to better themselves. The spiritual discipline of service enables one to say "no" to his desires and say "yes" to help others reconnect with God.[5]

5. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 127.

The participants learned in these sessions that the spiritual discipline of service involves their willingness to set aside their time, talent, and treasure for the benefit of others by the grace given to them by Jesus Christ. Further, they learned that the spiritual discipline of service is designed to deny self and for them to give freely out of the unselfish goodness that God has placed in their hearts by his presence.

They were taught that serving others should not mean they should expect to get something in return or that they would gain any moral high ground or superiority. Still, one should want to serve others simply because a person needs help and support.

Finally, the participants learned that the spiritual discipline of service comes from the examples and actions that Jesus Christ set for humanity. In these sessions, he discussed that he was considered a servant leader, which means he came to earth to serve and not be served. In the continued discussions in these sessions, it was explained that Jesus lowered himself by taking on the form of man to support and save humanity from the penalties of sin.

Nevertheless, in the same way, by serving others unconditionally, those actions proved the exact impact of Jesus Christ on man and showed that same love and grace to the world. Thus, the spiritual discipline of service empties one of self so that the whole creation could be lifted through mutual help within the body of Jesus Christ.

### Sessions 11 and 12: Spiritual Discipline of Confession

The eleventh and twelfth sessions of the project focused on the classic spiritual discipline of confession. Explanations were given concerning the definition of confession and a list of biblical resources, e-books, hand-outs, and online internet support. In these sessions, the book used was titled *Richard J. Foster's Study Guide for Celebration of*

*Discipline*, in which Foster infers, "It is God who does the forgiving, but often He chooses human beings as the channel of His forgiving grace."[6]

The participants learned that the spiritual discipline of confession could bring new life by admitting to God what he already knows. This meant for them to concede to what is factual or correct in their lives, acknowledge that they did something wrong, and want to make it right with themselves and with God. They also learned that the spiritual discipline of confession could help restore their souls to a right relationship with God, free them from the shackles of shame and guilt, and bring them into communion with him.

Furthermore, the participants learned that the spiritual discipline of confession could be complex for many reasons, such as perceptions that others seem perfect, which leads to the idea that they are the only ones who continue to struggle. In contrast, these sessions instructed the participants, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (Js. 5:16).

This scripture helped participants know that other than confessing to God, they should confess to someone with whom they have a relationship, in whom they have invested, who has positively invested in them, someone whom they can completely trust, someone they know will be praying for them, and someone who has their best interest at heart.

Finally, the participants learned that the spiritual discipline of confession is an essential biblical practice. They were taught that they could confess their faith in Jesus Christ, confess their sins, and confess the truth of God's Word. It was suggested in these

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6. Foster, *Richard J. Foster's Study Guide*, 59.

sessions that the spiritual discipline of confession should become each participant's regular and intentional practice of coming into agreement with God, which is, saying the same thing that God says should be done.

### Sessions 13 and 14: Spiritual Discipline of Worship

The thirtieth and fourteenth sessions of the project focused on the classic spiritual discipline of worship. Explanations were given concerning the definition of service and a list of biblical resources, e-books, hand-outs, and online internet support. In these project sessions, Foster's book *Celebration of Discipline* was used, in which he argued,

> To worship is to experience reality, to touch life. It is to know, to feel, to experience the resurrected Christ during the gathered community. Worship is a human response to divine initiative. Worship is our response to the overtures of love from the heart of the Father. It is kindled within us only when the Spirit of God touches our human spirit.[7]

In these sessions, the participants learned that the classic spiritual discipline of worship means to give reverence to God, to whom they should assign worth or value. Therefore, to worship God means to provide him with all the glory, honor, and praise. In addition, they were taught that the classic spiritual discipline of worship could be practiced both in private (being alone) and corporately (with other believers).

The participants learned that both corporate and private worship could include but not be limited to Bible readings, prayer, singing, preaching, and teaching, and more. Therefore, the point of worship is that everyone is prepared to glorify and honor God in all that they do. Therefore, when practicing the classic spiritual discipline of worship, one should view every moment of the day as an opportunity to worship God.

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7. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 138.

The participants were taught that the classic spiritual discipline of worship does not just have to happen at church during weekly Sunday worship services; instead, this discipline can happen throughout one's daily life. Therefore, one can worship God by singing along with favorite Christian songs or just thanking him for being set free from sin. In these sessions, the group learned that the classic spiritual discipline of worship is about showing God their love and respect in everything they do and giving him glory and honor.

Finally, the participants, who became overcomers, learned that the classic spiritual discipline of worship is to experience God's presence tangibly, revealing the truth about themselves. This action can lead to another classic spiritual discipline of confession discussed earlier in the project. They were taught that when they worship God, they are doing so not only because of who he is but also because of what he has done or will do for their lives.

This matter will be proven further in the following chapter by illuminating the evaluation process and clarifying the measurable outcome results of the project.

# Chapter IV

## Evaluation

This chapter reports the evaluative tools employed to measure the qualitative and quantitative statistical data using three measurable outcomes. This includes observations and summaries from pre- and post-project surveys, assessments, and statistical measurements concerning the twenty assigned participants in the project.

### Outcome One: Quantitative Results of the Project

The first measurable outcome was designed to measure the twenty participants' overall participation in the entire project. It focused on their comprehensive actions and completed all project assignments, the project curriculum (Appendix G), and the whole project. This evaluation revealed that twenty out of twenty (100%) participants took part in and completed the entire project. Since one of the quantitative, measurable outcomes in creating this project was to have at least eighty-five to one hundred percent participation, this goal exceeded fifteen percent.

### Outcome Two: Qualitative Results of the Project

The second measurable outcome of the project was designed to measure which of the seven spiritual disciplines would tangibly help change the participants' minds to want to reconnect with God and live productive lives in society.

After the twenty assigned participants completed their "Final Project Spiritual Disciplines Evaluation Survey" (Appendix H), the results were as follows:

- Eighteen out of twenty (90%) participants shared that the spiritual disciplines of meditation and confession would help them reconnect with God and live productive lives in society.
- Seventeen out of twenty (85%) participants shared that the spiritual disciplines of prayer and worship would help them reconnect with God and live productive lives in society.
- Sixteen out of twenty (80%) participants shared that the spiritual discipline of submission would help them reconnect with God and live productive lives in society.
- Fourteen out of twenty (70%) participants shared that the spiritual discipline of study would help them reconnect with God and live productive lives in society.
- Twelve out of twenty (60%) participants believed the spiritual discipline of service would help them reconnect with God and live productive lives in society.

In creating this part of the project, the measurable qualitative outcome was to see which of the seven spiritual disciplines mentioned would be most effective. The data showed that the spiritual disciplines of meditation and confession were confirmed as being most effective in helping the participants reconnect with God and want to live productive lives in society.

## Outcome Three: Quantitative Results of the Project

The third outcome was developed to measure and address how many newly released inmates actually changed their minds about reconnecting with God to live productive lives in society. In this process, the participants were allowed to share their project experiences and address whether the overall project caused them to change their minds and reconnect with God. The participants gave a comprehensive evaluation to see

if the project changed their minds to reconnect with God and live productive lives in society (Appendix I).

The results are as follows:

- Seventeen out of twenty (85%) participants who completed the project evaluation said they believed the project helped them change their minds, reconnect with God, and live productive lives in society.

- Three of the twenty (15%) participants who completed the project evaluation said they still were not convinced; the project did not change their minds to reconnect with God and want to live productive lives in society; however, they said that they would still be interested in further research and counseling in this matter in the future.

The quantitative, measurable outcome in creating this part of the project was to get at least eighty-five to one hundred percent of the participants to reconnect with God and live productive lives in society after completing the project. Hence, this quantitative, measurable outcome was met.

The final chapter will review learning from the project and what might be shaped differently for future iterations.

# Chapter V

## Conclusion

This project was designed to help to lead a group of newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, to reconnect with God and live productive lives in society by using seven classical spiritual disciplines, showing the concept of missional living affiliated with SFRR Ministry in Houston, Texas.

When the project was first created, several suggestions arose about which part should be specifically implemented. As the project evolved, three outcomes came into focus. First, the project should show how many overcomers actually completed. Second, by teaching seven classic spiritual disciplines to the assigned participants, the goal was to see which of the seven classic spiritual disciplines could help them reconnect with God and live productive lives in society. Third, the goal was to see how many participants would actually reconnect with God and want to live productive lives in society.

As the project transitioned from week to week, it focused on the specific needs that the participants shared in the project. They felt they would need help learning how to pray, meditate, submit, worship, offer service, study, and confess. Many of the participants had been trying to find something tangible that would help them change their lives for the better. This critical purpose became helpful in allowing the use of specific spiritual disciplines that each participant would need to help them reconnect with God and live a productive life in society consistently.

Some participants shared their frustration throughout the project about why this matter had been a difficult journey for them to complete. Each argument by the participants was well received. Based on what they shared, many of them had been distracted by other matters in their lives that caused them to stay disconnected from God.

Although they might have had an encounter with God through their participation with other ministries, they felt they still needed something more to help them get reconnected with God. Because the information taught related to the Great Commission, missional living, mental models, and seven spiritual disciplines in this project curriculum, the project's outcome was to help these overcomers reconnect with God and want to live productive lives in society utilizing these specific components.

Furthermore, by clarifying each participant's background, the project focused on their hearts and souls and made that the primary source and coordinating principle of their individual lives. Moreover, using the seven spiritual disciplines and biblical references, each participant in the project presented a distinct identity to implement and use each spiritual discipline effectively.

As the project developed, the psychological reality of the participants' current disconnection with God was revealed. To help them in this process, a shared saying was asked of them to repeat regularly and constantly in their lives, and that was, "A changed mind is a changed life."

Throughout this project, it was essential to focus on the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God, which could help bring new life to those who may have been living in sin, making it possible for them to become activated in their spiritual growth by using spiritual disciplines, such as meditation, prayer, submission, service, study, confession,

and worship. In addition, these seven spiritual disciplines helped the project to focus on the importance of psychological research and teaching each participant how to activate each of the seven spiritual disciplines for their lives as individuals.

Since this project was intended to lead a group of newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit to reconnect with God and want to live productive lives in society by using seven spiritual disciplines and missional living affiliated with SFRR Ministry, it was important for each participant to complete this task without reservation. When the project was first created, it focused on resolving a current identified problem about the continued spiritual disconnection between several newly released inmates and God related to them wanting to live a consistent and productive life in society.

Nevertheless, the goal here was to create a project focused on qualitative, quantitative, metaphysical, and phenomenological results, which others could use to implement such a project in their own assigned ministry. In addition, this project contributed to scholarly knowledge of the participants' practices and experiences to help them arrive at a more personal, individual perspective than those who may not have taken part in this project.

At the end of the project, it was revealed that although everyone may not have been ready to reconnect with God in order to live a productive life in society, it would still be suitable for all of them to continue the process of fulfilling the Great Commission and to practice the concepts of missional living and mental models, in the realistic hope that those actions eventually would help them reconnect with God and want to live productive lives in society.

Because a minority were unsure about their future regarding reconnection with God, it became clear that at least one facet could be done differently in future attempts. Adding more spiritual disciplines to the project would allow more participants to have the chance and opportunity to reconnect with God and live productive lives in a society.

Therefore, one's action moving forward in this matter is to continue to pray that others can use the information presented in this project to help them help those who may need help reconnecting with God and living a productive life in society through the concepts of the Great Commission, missional living, mental models, as well as the classical spiritual disciplines. Finally, leading change in one's life can only be done if someone wants to change their mind for the better. Through these actions, one will have the continued opportunity and chance to reconnect with God and live a productive life in society.

# Appendix A

## Invitation to Participate in the Project

# Appendix A

## Invitation to Participate in the Project

Hello Project Participants,

My name is Pastor Maurice Smarr. I am currently completing my Doctor of Ministry Degree specializing in Pastoral Leadership from the Houston Graduate School of Theology in Houston, Texas. I am inviting you with the expectations of gaining your contribution with my final project on leading a group of newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, who want to reconnect with God and live productive lives in society using spiritual disciplines and missional living affiliated with Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry in Houston, Texas.

While the views in this matter have been a theme of attention in society for many years, further action lies in its consideration of newly released inmates' experiences, specifically those who want to reconnect with God and live a productive life in society. Therefore, the efforts in this project are to supply a unique contribution to scholarly knowledge and practices of the nature and experiences of newly released inmates to arrive at a more personal, individual perspective than those who may not have taken part in this project that presently exists.

This project will afford newly released inmates to be introduced to seven classic spiritual disciplines, leading them to reconnect with God and live a productive life in society. In addition, this life-changing experience could contribute to future projects on the experiences of newly released inmates who wish to reconnect with God and live a productive life in society. Furthermore, the participation of the newly released inmates' life-changing experiences in this project may also add value to the future experiences of newly released inmates who want to reconnect with God and live a productive life in society.

The project will involve newly released inmates of the multi-denominational Protestant faith from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, who want to reconnect with God and live productive lives in society to take part in this project.

Thank you for the opportunity to consider my request.

With many blessings,

Pastor Maurice Smarr

## Appendix B

## Confirmation Letter

## Appendix B

## Confirmation Letter

Hello Research Participant,

Thank you for accepting to take part in this project, in leading a group of newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, to reconnect with God and wanting to live productive lives in society using spiritual disciplines and missional living affiliated with Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry in Houston, Texas, scheduled for (day), (date) at (time) located at (location). The purpose of this project is to explore and learn about seven classic spiritual disciplines which can positively help all participants in this project who want to reconnect with God and live a productive life in society.

Your contribution to this project will allow you to help yourself and others who want to reconnect with God and live productive lives in society by seven classic spiritual disciplines. In addition, your contribution in this project experience could add to the development of future projects on the experiences of other newly released inmates and may add value to the future experiences of newly released inmates. You will be asked to ink-sign the enclosed inform consent and confidentiality forms to recommend your willingness to participate to the project director.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may refuse to respond to any part of the project and refuse to include any information about the project at any time during the process. Your honesty and truthful answers will be shown anonymously. Thank you for your participation.

With many blessings,

Pastor Maurice Smarr, Project Director

Enclosure

## Appendix C

## Behavioral Mental Assessment

## Appendix C

## Behavioral Mental Assessment

If you are in a state of crisis or need immediate help for any reason, please refrain from filling out this assessment and call 911. Likewise, if you feel you are a danger to yourself, please refrain from filling out this assessment and contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

This online Mental Health assessment takes approximately five minutes and will supply general feedback when completed. Please note that this assessment is not a formal diagnostic tool and should not be interpreted as such. This assessment is free and can be taken anonymously if you choose.

If you answer "yes" to any of the questions provided, it is highly recommended that you contact a qualified healthcare provider asap.

Suppose you answer "no" to the questions provided. In that case, you are still encouraged to reach out to the staff at a qualified healthcare provider for a detailed evaluation of your risk for Mental Health if applicable.[1]

Please know that the project director will only view your assessment results and will not be saved.

1. Do you find yourself sad, anxious, irritable, or worried most days of the week for extended periods? Yes ___ No ___

2. Do you have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep? Yes ___ No ___

3. Do you feel tired or lethargic most of the time, no matter how much sleep you get? Yes ___ No ___

4. Do you ever feel like you are being watched, fearful that someone is constantly out to get you? Yes ___ No ___

5. Do you continually experience racing, intrusive thoughts that you cannot seem to quiet? Yes ___ No ___

6. Do you ever feel a sensation of deep euphoria for no apparent reason, as if you could conquer anything? Yes ___ No ___

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1. "Online Mental Health Assessment | Cascade Behavioral Health," Cascade Behavioral Health Hospital, last modified January 15, 2018, https://www.cascadebh.com/admissions/assessment/mental-health/.

7. Do you ever compulsively engage in behaviors that you later regret or could compromise your safety (e.g., gambling, over-spending, shoplifting, or risky sexual behavior)? Yes ___ No ___

8. Do you ever feel unable to relax if things are not symmetrical, engaging in habitual counting or reordering objects? Yes ___ No ___

9. Have you ever heard a voice or seen something that you later realized was not there or was not seen by others? Yes ___ No ___

10. Do you ever feel unable to leave your home, even when you have work, school, or social responsibilities? Yes ___ No ___

11. Do you ever restrict your food intake or overeat to the point of sickness? Yes ___ No ___

12. Do you struggle to control your temper, often feeling elevated levels of rage? Yes ___ No ___

13. Do you extensively use substances like alcohol or illicit drugs, often feeling unable to function without them? Yes ___ No ___

14. Do you ever have thoughts of harming others, and have you ever planned to do so? Yes ___ No ___

15. Have you thought of harming yourself, or have you ever tried to take your own life? Yes ___ No ___[2]

2. "Online Mental Health Assessment | Cascade Behavioral Health," 2018.

## Appendix D

## Personal Assessment Survey

## Appendix D

## Personal Assessment Survey

The purpose of this Personal Assessment Survey is to supply information about your current experience, relationship, and understanding of God and Jesus Christ. Your answers to this personal assessment survey could add to the development of future projects about leading a group of newly released inmates from across the world who may want to reconnect with God and live a productive life in society and may add value to future experiences of newly released inmates of the same. Please know that only your answers from the Personal Assessment Survey will be shared in the overall project. Your participation in completing this Personal Assessment Survey is voluntary as you may refuse to respond to any questions in the Personal Assessment Survey with prejudice. However, your honesty and your truthful answers will be shown anonymously.

1. What do you know about God?

2. What does God mean to you?

3. What do you know about Jesus Christ?

4. What does Jesus Christ mean to you?

## Appendix E

## Informed Consent and Confidentiality Form

## Appendix E

## Informed Consent and Confidentiality Form

START DATE: 06-01-2020

EXPIRATION DATE: 01-31-2021

**TITLE OF PROJECT:**

Leading a Group of Newly Released Inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, to Reconnect with God and to Live Productive Lives in Society using Spiritual Disciplines and Missional Living Affiliated with Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry in Houston, Texas

**PROJECT DIRECTOR**

Pastor Maurice Smarr

Student's Name

Pastor Maurice Smarr

Doctor of Ministry (DMin) Specialization: Pastoral Leadership

Final Project Chair

Dr. Becky Towne

Dear Research Participant,

**PURPOSE OF STUDY**

You are invited to take part in this project conducted by Pastor Maurice Smarr. The The Project Director is a current doctoral student, Doctor of Ministry (DMin) Specialization: Pastoral Leadership, at the Houston Graduate School of Theology in Houston, Texas. The purpose of this project is to lead a group of newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, to reconnect with God and who want to live productive lives in society using spiritual disciplines and missional living affiliated with Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry in Houston, Texas. The focus of this project is three-fold. First, the project aims to present seven classic spiritual disciplines to (20) newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, fulfilling "The Great Commission" and showing the actions of missional living by using the concept of mental models. Secondly, the project aims to see which of the seven classic spiritual disciplines would help the inmates reconnect with God and live a productive life in society. Lastly, the project aims to see how inmates who took part in the project reconnected with God and wanted to live a productive life in society.

The project participant's contribution will be newly released inmates who share a multi-denominational Protestant faith, want to reconnect with God, and live a productive society.

**Informed Consent**

The project participants will be involved in in-depth, semi-structured bi-weekly sessions via face-to-face or using social media platforms, current video, and audio online virtual conferencing outlets if applicable. First, however, the Project Director will receive a signed informed consent agreement in person.

The nature of the participant's contribution to this project is voluntary. The project participants can cease the research process, refuse to respond to any interview questions, and refuse to include any information about the project during the sessions. The participant's withdrawal from the project sessions will be conducted without penalty by letting the Project Director know that he does not want to participate in the project sessions any further. The project participant(s) may withdraw from the project by giving a verbal request by telephone or by sending a written request by email or postal mail. If the project participant(s) withdraws, his personal information and data will be deleted from all saved electronic devices. In addition, all paperwork will be shredded, recordings erased, and flash drives crushed for disposal at once by the Project Director.

**Confidentiality**

Confidentiality will be given by restricting the public's access to all project data related to the signed informed consent agreement, data connected to the project that deals with personal information (names, mailing addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses).

The data collection methods and information, answers to the project curriculum, surveys, evaluations, and assessments will only be revealed to measure all assigned outcomes of the project. The project participants will be identified as “overcomers.”

All research data, including data information mentioned in the above paragraph, will be confidently reviewed by the Project Director only and noted throughout the project to measure the project’s assigned outcomes. The Projector Director will supply standard computer programs and software for analyzing data to minimize project participant bias. In addition, the Project Director will interpret all data collected to confirm that the project participant’s answers and actions of his experience taking part in the project are captured correctly.

All research data of the research participant will be stored temporally on a personal computer that will be password protected. The computer will be secured in the Project Director’s office, where the Project Director will be the only person privy to the information. All research data will be deleted accordingly, and only the requested saved data will be used to help support all supported outcomes of the project.

**Risk**

The topic of this project may create minimum risks of emotional responses of the project participant(s). However, if the project participant(s) should experience emotional reactions, he will be referred to professional, licensed, and certified social services for guidance and counseling if applicable.

**Benefits**

The project participant(s) may not receive direct benefit from contributing to the research. However, limited actions will provide the support needed for the Project Director to lead a group of newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, to reconnect with God and who want to live productive lives in society using spiritual disciplines and missional living affiliated with Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry in Houston, Texas. The benefit for the project participant(s) is that the findings from this project contribute to the development of future projects on the experiences leading a group of newly released inmates who want to reconnect with God and want to live a productive life in society and to help add value in this matter.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Suppose the project participant(s) has additional questions about his role and rights as a project participant or would like to supply his contribution, obtain information, or would like to document a complaint about this project. In that case, he may contact, openly or anonymously, the:

Houston Graduate of Theology Doctor of Ministry Committee Chair

or

Contact the Project Director at:

Pastor Maurice Smarr

**CONSENT**

I am requesting your consent to participate in this project as a part of your agreed overall participation. Please verify your consent by checking Yes__ or No___. Your signature on this form will confirm your approved participation in this project.

I have read and understood the information that has been provided. I have also had the opportunity to ask questions, seek legal and or spiritual counsel if applicable. I know that my participation is voluntary, and I have the right to end my involvement in this project at any time without giving a reason. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form and participate in future projects such as this group if continued help is needed. I voluntarily agree to take part in this project.

Participant's
Signature_____Date_____

Project Director
Signature_____Date_____

## Appendix F

## Spiritual Disciplines and Practices Self-Assessment

## Appendix F

## Spiritual Disciplines and Practices Self-Assessment

**YOUR NAME:**

**PLEASE READ THIS CAREFULLY**

This inventory is designed to help you assess your current level of practice of several spiritual disciplines that historically have been considered by the church to be vital for a maturing, growing believer. However, all these practices are profitable for spiritual growth and development, though it is uncommon for any individual Christian to practice all of them at an elevated level of frequency at the same time. As unique members of the Body of Christ, we have various levels of experience in the faith, different personalities and preferences, varying degrees of training and guidance in spiritual things, and other callings as to how we are to live out our devotion to Christ. The following list of items, then, is not meant to show the profile of the "ideal" Christian or to communicate to you what is expected of you if you were "really spiritual." Instead, it is an opportunity for you to find those aspects of your spiritual lifestyle that are regular disciplines and those areas that are not currently a part of your spiritual practice. In dialogue with the Mid-Point Assessment Staff, this will allow you to reflect thoughtfully on the dynamics of your spiritual growth at this time in your life.

Check the boxes that most accurately represent your current practice. Your honesty is important for two reasons: (1) as a Christian servant seeking credentialed ministerial status; you need to be as equipped spiritually as you can be; this assessment will help you identify some potential areas in which you can "put on the armor of God" more fully, and (2) as a Christian servant who is going to be part of a team effort with accountability, you need to be able to receive input and direction from others who can assist you with your spiritual development; this assessment will help others resource you for growth. Please save a copy for your records before returning this complete form as an email attachment to the email address noted above.[1]

For each statement, circle the one (1) that best describes your current practice:

1. I practice some form of personal prayer or meditation

   less than weekly  at least weekly  2-3 times per week  daily

1. Intermountain District Church of the Nazarene, accessed May 22, 2020, https://intermountaindistrict.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Master-Spiritual-Disciplines-and-Practices-Self-Assessment-FORM.pdf.

2. I pray with other Christians

   less than weekly  at least weekly  2-3 times per week  daily

3. I read my Bible devotionally

   less than weekly  at least weekly  2-3 times per week  daily

4. I read spiritual writings (other than the Bible)

   less than weekly  at least weekly  2-3 times per week  daily

5. I study the Scriptures

   less than weekly  at least weekly  2-3 times per week  daily

6. I spend time alone in quiet solitude or silence

   less than weekly  at least weekly  2-3 times per week  daily

7. I fast or engage in other deliberate acts to simplify my life from overdependence on material things

   never or rarely  at least monthly  at least weekly

8. I keep a personal journal of my thoughts, feelings, and prayers

   never or rarely  at least monthly  at least weekly

9. I contribute from my financial resources through

   tithing  offerings  tithes and offerings  no regular giving

10. I participate in the ministry of my local church

    occasionally  at least monthly  at least weekly

11. I engage in some form of ministry or service to the poor & needy in my world

    never or rarely  at least monthly  at least weekly

12. I participate in a worship service in a local church

    never or rarely at least monthly at least weekly

13. I practice "sabbath" as a period set aside for rest and renewal

    never or rarely at least monthly at least weekly

14. I receive spiritual direction from a spiritual guide or mentor

    never or rarely at least monthly at least weekly

15. I participate in a small group where I can share, seek guidance, and be held accountable for growth

    never or rarely at least monthly at least weekly

16. I enjoy social interaction (fellowship and celebration) with brothers and sisters in Christ

    never or rarely at least monthly at least weekly

17. I engage in a personal care practice that builds my physical, mental, and emotional life

    never or rarely at least monthly at least weekly

List any other disciplines or practices that you regularly practice:[2]

2. Intermountain District Church of the Nazarene: Intermountain District Mid-Point Assessment, 2020.

## Appendix G

## Project Curriculum

## Appendix G

## Project Curriculum

### Sessions One and Two: Meditation

The purpose of this project curriculum is to provide information related to seven spiritual disciplines of mediation that would help a group of newly released inmates (overcomers) from the Jester III Prison in Richmond, Texas, reconnect with God, and live productive lives in society. One of the ways one can conduct this task is by exercising the use of spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines are actions one does to practice reliance on Jesus Christ.

**Sessions One and Two:** Mediation "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Jos 1:8).

**Discussion:** The spiritual discipline of meditation is an excellent place to start for a person who wants to reconnect with God. When one learns to meditate, one learns to connect with God to develop spiritual and emotional healing. The spiritual discipline of meditation also allows one to create a living presence of God for himself.[1]

Since the spiritual discipline of meditation is usually practiced in isolation, one needs to practice the spiritual discipline of meditation in quiet areas and be free from any distractions. It is also essential to create a consistent place to meditate with God instead of making multiple places. As one learns to meditate with God consistently, he will begin to create a communicative relationship that would help him stay connected with God.[2]

**Action plan:**[3]

1. Find a biblical text that you are currently studying. Begin the read the text aloud and in silence. As you read the biblical text in silence, allow yourself the activate the spiritual discipline of meditation. Try to repeat these steps several times. Each time you repeat it, emphasize a different part of the biblical text. You might consider using the journal to help document the results of these actions related to your efforts toward the spiritual discipline of meditation.

2. As you continue to practice the spiritual discipline of meditation, begin to ask God to remove all distractions in life permanently. Keep in mind, to effectively

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1. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 19–23.

2. Ibid., 24–31.

3. Michael Bischof. "Spiritual Disciplines: Clover Sites." *Souleader Resources.* (Foothill Ranch, CA, 2005), 8.

reconnect with God requires you to stay focus on creating a positive path of redemption for your life.

3. As you continue to practice the spiritual discipline of meditation, begin to think about a new idea or action you have recently thought about that would help you create a positive change in your life. Then, sitting quietly, begin to focus on that idea or activity and ask God if it is in His will to allow it to become a reality for your life?

4. Begin to schedule quit time in life each day for at least 30 minutes and spend time with nature in silence, blocking out everything around you. As you take this moment in, begin to thank God for who He is to you and what He means to your life. Then, allow your soul to connect with the power of the Holy Spirit.

5. As you continue to practice the spiritual discipline of meditation, allow yourself to be transformed by renewing your mind (Rom 12:2). These actions will help you get closer to God and stay connected with him and live a productive life in society. As you practice the spiritual discipline of meditation, listening for any spiritual guidance you may receive from the Lord. in this posture, pray in a way as if you are receiving complete directions from the Lord. These actions should help you want to reconnect with God and live a productive life in society.

**After the completion of this session, please answer the following questions:**

1. What does the spiritual discipline of meditation mean to you and your life as it relates to (Jos 1:8)?

2. In your own opinion, how does the spiritual discipline of meditation relate to your relationship with Jesus Christ?

3. In your own opinion, how can the spiritual discipline of mediation help you reconnect with God or not?

4. Does the spiritual discipline of meditation help you change your mindset towards God positively or negatively? If so, why?

5. What actions will you begin to take moving forward related to the spiritual discipline of meditation to help you reconnect with God and want to live a productive life in society?

## Project Curriculum

### Sessions Three and Four: Prayer

The purpose of this project curriculum is to provide information related to seven spiritual disciplines of prayer that would help a group of newly released inmates (overcomers) from the Jester III Prison in Richmond, Texas, reconnect with God, and live productive lives in society. One of the ways one can conduct this task is by exercising the use of spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines are actions one does to practice reliance on Jesus Christ.

**Sessions Three and Four:** Prayer "pray continually" (1 Thess 5:17).

**Discussion:** An essential part of one's spiritual growth is through the spiritual discipline of prayer. Since it can be difficult for one to learn the concept of prayer as a spiritual discipline, it may be essential for him to involve spiritual activities that would help him keep the spiritual discipline of prayer in action. For the spiritual discipline of prayer to be active in one's life, one must first develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The foundation of salvation will allow the power of prayer to help fulfill God's ultimate plan for one's life.[4]

Moreover, practicing the concept of prayer as a discipline is to look at it with an open mind. For example, one may have only experienced the idea of prayer as talking to God. Therefore, it would be good to share the spiritual discipline of prayer by being silent and listening to God speak instead.[5]
The spiritual discipline of prayer can allow one to communicate with God effectively. Keep in mind that one's prayer should never be about giving God a list of requests but to ask that his will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt 6:10).

**Action plan:**[6]

1. As you continue to practice the spiritual discipline of prayer, try to change the way you usually pray. For example, instead of praying alone, begin to pray with others. Begin to pray that God's will be done in your life. Also, when you pray, try to learn "The Our Father Prayer" (Matt 6:9-13).

2. As you continue to practice the spiritual discipline of prayer, begin to use that time in your life to clear your mind and help to free you from all negativities in your life.

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4. Willard, *The Spirit of The Disciplines,* 186–8.

5. Ibid.

6. Bischof, "Spiritual Disciplines: Clover Sites," 10.

3. As you continue to practice the spiritual discipline of prayer, find a place that inspires devotion within your heart and not with your mind.

4. As you continue to practice the spiritual discipline of prayer, allow the concept of prayer to become your lifestyle.

**After the completion of this session, please answer the following questions:**

1. What does the spiritual discipline of prayer mean to you and your life as it relates to (1 Thess 5:17)?

2. In your own opinion, how does the spiritual discipline of s relate to your relationship with Jesus Christ?

3. In your own opinion, how can the spiritual discipline of submission help you reconnect with God or not?

4. Does the spiritual discipline of submission help you change your mindset towards God positively or negatively? If so, why?

5. What actions will you begin to take moving forward related to the spiritual discipline of prayer to help you reconnect with God and want to live a productive life in society?

## Project Curriculum

### Sessions Five and Six: Study

The purpose of this project curriculum is to provide information related to seven spiritual disciplines of study that would help a group of newly released inmates (overcomers) from the Jester III Prison in Richmond, Texas, reconnect with God, and live productive lives in society. One of the ways one can conduct this task is by exercising the use of spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines are actions one does to practice reliance on Jesus Christ.

**Sessions Five and Six:** Study, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom 12:2).

**Discussion:** The concept of study can be one's spiritual action of commitment to God. This can be an essential spiritual discipline for someone who wants to reconnect with God and live a productive life in society. However, the spiritual discipline of study is different from the concept of meditation. Meditation focuses on one's devotional actions, while the spiritual discipline of study is more systematic in one's life.[7]

The spiritual discipline of study is the primary way to engage himself with biblical studies interaction related to God's word. However, the spiritual discipline of study can also focus on the readings of other books the biblical support content. In addition, one can improve his spiritual discipline of study by listening to a spiritual advisor who can help him change his mindset for the better.[8]

The spiritual discipline of study can also provide one with a basic understanding. He must learn to develop an attitude of humility and humbleness that would help him create an effectively communicatively and consistent relationship with God.[9]

**Action plan:**[10]

1. Using a Bible or other books related to biblical content, find scripture(s) that you would like to learn more about. You may use as many resources as possible that you think you would need to complete this task. After completing this step, create a journal to help you understand what the Bible says about your scripture(s) of interest.

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7. Willard, *The Spirit of The Disciplines,* 176–81.

8. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 55–67.

9. Ibid.

10. Bischof, "Spiritual Disciplines: Clover Sites," 12.

2. If you are a church or ministry member, begin to make time in your life to attend weekly Bible studies. First, spend time listening to what is taught in the Bible study and take good notes on what was discussed in the Bible study. Then, after attending each bible study, begin to spend some personal time studying the same biblical lesson(s) and reflect on what you have learned to see which principles or applications you can use to help you want to reconnect with God and want to live a productive life in society.

3. Since the most critical aspect of the spiritual discipline of study is the constancy of reading the word of God, then begin to create a daily and or weekly bible reading schedule. Of course, if you find this difficult doing it yourself, please get others to help you complete this task.

4. The best way to strengthen the spiritual discipline of study in your life is to set short-term or long-term goals related to studying. Then, begin to create plans to conduct that way to develop a continued self-assessment in this matter.

**After the completion of this session, please answer the following questions:**

1. What does the spiritual discipline of study mean to you and your life as it relates to (Rom 12:2)?

2. In your own opinion, how does the spiritual discipline of study relate to your relationship with Jesus Christ?

3. In your own opinion, how can the spiritual discipline of study help you reconnect with God or not?

4. Does the spiritual discipline of study help you change your mindset towards God positively or negatively? If so, why?

5. What actions will you begin to take moving forward related to the spiritual discipline of study to help you reconnect with God and want to live a productive life in society?

## Project Curriculum

### Sessions Seven and Eight: Submission

The purpose of this project curriculum is to provide information related to seven spiritual disciplines of submission that would help a group of newly released inmates (overcomers) from the Jester III Prison in Richmond, Texas, reconnect with God, and live productive lives in society. One of the ways one can conduct this task is by exercising the use of spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines are actions one does to practice reliance on Jesus Christ.

**Sessions Seven and Eight:** Submission "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph 5:21).

**Discussion:** When one submits to another in the actions of Jesus Christ, he engages the knowledge of those in his communion who are capable to direct his efforts in spiritual growth and who then add the weight of his absolute authority on the side of the Holy Spirit willing to help him do the right things and help him refrain from doing something in his life that are wrong.[11]

The spiritual discipline of submission can be misunderstood. In many ways, the concept of submission can draw conflict between the aspect of power and authority. The idea of submission should never be misused in the areas of leadership or relationship. Therefore, the Bible teaches that the spiritual discipline of submission should always involve freely submitting himself to wise counsel or insight and direction of another.[12]

**Action plan:**[13]

1. Create a list of people you know and who you may be comfortable submitting to base on their empathy and wisdom in your life. This would be an excellent place to start that would allow you to practice the spiritual discipline of submission and help you reconnect with God and live a productive life in society.

2. If you are married, have a partner, or a friend, begin to positively show an act of submission that you have not done towards that person recently.

3. The next time you are asked to do something (that you know is the right thing to do) but you may disagree or may not want to do it, try being silent for a moment and positively submit to the request that has been suggested and see if in doing that will help you want to reconnect with God and want to live a productive life or not.

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11. Willard, *The Spirit of The Disciplines*, 190–2.

12. Ibid.

13. Bischof, "Spiritual Disciplines: Clover Sites," 21.

4. If you have communicated with a spiritual advisor, ask them to help you practice the spiritual discipline of submission in real-time. Remember, practicing the spiritual discipline of submission means learning to do what you are positively told to do in your life without reservation.

**After the completion of this session, please answer the following questions:**

1. What does the spiritual discipline of submission mean to you and your life as it relates to (Eph 5:21)?

2. In your own opinion, how does the spiritual discipline of submission relate to your relationship with Jesus Christ?

3. In your own opinion, how can the spiritual discipline of submission help you reconnect with God or not?

4. Does the spiritual discipline of submission help you change your mindset towards God positively or negatively? If so, why?

5. What actions will you begin to take moving forward related to the spiritual discipline of submission to help you reconnect with God and want to live a productive life in society?

## Project Curriculum

### Sessions Nine and Ten: Service

The purpose of this project curriculum is to provide information related to seven spiritual disciplines of service that would help a group of newly released inmates (overcomers) from the Jester III Prison in Richmond, Texas, reconnect with God, and live productive lives in society. One of the ways one can conduct this task is by exercising the use of spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines are actions one does to practice reliance on Jesus Christ.

**Session Nine and Ten:** Service "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col 3:23-24).

**Discussion:** The spiritual discipline of service is critical to one's action to reconnect with God and live a productive life in society. It is imperative to know that Jesus Christ is considered a servant leader as his primary mission on earth was to serve and help others. He may have opportunities to do at some point in one's life, but he may not have the experience of service as a spiritual discipline.[14]

The spiritual discipline of service can be considered the intentional use of one's time, skills, or resources for the good of others. The spiritual discipline of service can take place in many locations. However, the importance of one's actions related to the spiritual discipline of service should never be drawn from the context of service. Still, it should always focus on the purpose and transformation in the heart of the one who is serving. For example, the spiritual discipline of service can help train one to avoid being arrogant, jealous, greedy, bitter, or materialistic.[15]

**Action plan:**[16]

1. Since there are many opportunities for you to practice the spiritual discipline of service, consider serving faithful in your home, neighborhood by showing acts of kindness by offering some of your services to others without expecting anything from them in return.

2. As you continue to practice the spiritual discipline of service, create a written plan of action that would allow you to develop a continued mindset to serve others, want to reconnect with God, and want to live a productive life in society.

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14. Willard, *The Spirit of The Disciplines,* 182–84.

15. Ibid.

16. Bischof, "Spiritual Disciplines: Clover Sites," 11.

**After the completion of this session, please answer the following questions:**

1. What does the spiritual discipline of service mean to you and your life as it relates to (Col 3:23-24)?

2. In your own opinion, how does the spiritual discipline of service relate to your relationship with Jesus Christ?

3. In your own opinion, how can the spiritual discipline of service help you reconnect with God or not?

4. Does the spiritual discipline of service help you change your mindset towards God positively or negatively? If so, why?

5. What actions will you begin to take moving forward related to the spiritual discipline of service to help you reconnect with God and want to live a productive life in society?

## Project Curriculum

### Sessions Eleven and Twelve: Confession

The purpose of this project curriculum is to provide information related to seven spiritual disciplines of confession that would help a group of newly released inmates (overcomers) from the Jester III Prison in Richmond, Texas, reconnect with God, and live productive lives in society. One of the ways one can conduct this task is by exercising the use of spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines are actions one does to practice reliance on Jesus Christ.

**Sessions Eleven and Twelve:** Confession "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (Jas 5:16).

**Discussion:** The spiritual discipline of confession trusts others with information about his deepest vulnerabilities and failures. One of the best ways to receive support and mercy from others is through the spiritual discipline of confession. Although the concept of confession can happen between two or more people, it is best to practice confession with God's spiritual discipline.[17]

When one practices the spiritual discipline of confession with God, he activates his forgiveness for himself. Since forgiveness is a method, it always takes time in the healing process. Therefore, the healing practice of confession becomes an essential part of this type of behavior.[18]

The best part of one's forgiveness of his sins is through the spiritual discipline of confession in which he believes in his heart that Jesus died for his sins and was resurrected (Jn 3:16). Furthermore, when one spends quality time in confession, he positions himself to receive grace, love, and forgiveness from God's only begotten son Jesus Christ.[19]

**Action plan:**[20]

1. As you continue to practice the spiritual discipline of confession, begin reading and meditating (Jas 5:16). Begin to allow Jesus to come in or come back into your life to help move you past your sins. As you confess your sin with God, picture God's face full of unconditional love and acceptance for your life. Allow yourself to feel and experience a transformation process that would allow you to feel God's grace and forgiveness in your life.

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17. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 59–63.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Bischof, "Spiritual Disciplines: Clover Sites," 4.

2. As you continue to practice the spiritual discipline of confession, begin to find others you may need to forgive or who may need to forgive you. Begin to discuss your understanding of forgiveness with them. Spend time praying for each other that God will allow the healing process to begin.

3. If you become a part of a small group that is very safe, consider how you might find ways to practice the spiritual discipline of confession in the context of people. If you are not part of a small group, consider sharing the spiritual discipline of confession in your journal. Over time, these actions will help you check your progress related to your desire to reconnect with God and live a productive life in society.

**After the completion of this session, please answer the following questions:**

1. What does the spiritual discipline of confession mean to you and your life as it relates to (Eph 5:21)?

2. In your own opinion, how does the spiritual discipline of confession relate to your relationship with Jesus Christ?

3. In your own opinion, how can the spiritual discipline of confession help you reconnect with God or not?

4. Does the spiritual discipline of confession help you change your mindset towards God positively or negatively? If so, why?

5. What actions will you begin to take moving forward related to the spiritual discipline of worship to help you reconnect with God and want to live a productive life in society?

## Project Curriculum

### Sessions Thirteen and Fourteen: Worship

The purpose of this project curriculum is to provide information related to seven spiritual disciplines of worship that would help a group of newly released inmates (overcomers) from the Jester III Prison in Richmond, Texas, reconnect with God, and live productive lives in society. One of the ways one can conduct this task is by exercising the use of spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines are actions one does to practice reliance on Jesus Christ.

**Sessions Thirteen and Fourteen:** Worship "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks" (John 4:23).

**Discussion:** The spiritual discipline of worship is one experiencing God. The concept of worship starts with one knowing who God is. The idea of worship is not about one's emotions or feelings. However, worship is all about giving God the praise, honor, and worth he truly deserves. Since God is so approachable, the concept of worship prompts one to approach him with consistency. The spiritual discipline of worship allows one to put God in his rightful place as the believer reflects on God and all he has done in his life.[21]

In addition to singing in a church service, the spiritual discipline of worship includes prayer, quiet, recitation, cavorting, cheering, and many other expressions of praise and admiration towards God. The spiritual discipline of worship is all about having a purifying experience with God. Since many people convey the spiritual discipline of worship in many ways, one needs to look beyond worship and focus on the deity of worship that only pleases God.[22]

**Action plan:**[23]

1. As you continue to practice the spiritual discipline of worship, begin ending any disturbances that cause you not to worship God effectively.

2. If you like the sound of music in your worship of God, try to find music that supports the overall genuine concept of worshiping God.

3. If you prefer to practice the spiritual discipline of worship in silence, make sure you position yourself in a tranquil place or location.

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21. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 138–42.

22. Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 118.

23. Bischof, "Spiritual Disciplines: Clover Sites," 2.

4. If you prefer to practice the spiritual discipline of worship naturally, it would be good for you to develop an open mind and begin to allow God to come into your life regularly. These actions should help you reconnect with God and live a productive life in society.

5. As you continue to practice the spiritual discipline of worship, try to include your human characteristics, such as how you treat yourself and others.

**After the completion of this session, please answer the following questions:**

1. What does the spiritual discipline of worship mean to you and your life as it relates to (John 4:23)?

2. In your own opinion, how does the spiritual discipline of worship relate to your relationship with Jesus Christ?

3. In your own opinion, how can the spiritual discipline of worship help you reconnect with God or not?

4. Does the spiritual discipline of worship help you change your mindset towards God positively or negatively? If so, why?

5. What actions will you begin to take moving forward related to the spiritual discipline of worship to help you reconnect with God and want to live a productive life in society?

## Appendix H

## Final Project Spiritual Disciplines Evaluation Survey

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## Final Project Spiritual Disciplines Evaluation Survey

1. **Which of the following seven classic spiritual disciplines discussed in the project helped you change your mind, reconnect with God, and want to live a productive life in society? Please circle all that applies:**

   meditation, prayer, study, submission, service, confession, and worship.

2. **Which of the following seven classic spiritual disciplines discussed in the project did not help you change your mind, reconnect with God, and want to live a productive life in society? Please circle all that applies:**

   meditation, prayer, study, submission, service, confession, and worship.

## Appendix I

## Final Project Overall Evaluation

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## Final Project Overall Evaluation

After completing the project and based on each participant's written and verbal confirmations, below is the total number of project participants who actually changed their minds, wanted to reconnect with God, and wanted to live a productive life in society.

**(17) participants**

After completing the project and based on each participant's written and verbal confirmations, below is the total number of project participants whose minds did not change, did not want to reconnect with God, or wanted to live a productive life in society.

**(3) participants**

## Appendix J

## Project Narrative Proposal

## Project Narrative Proposal

The subject of this project was the development of a training curriculum for the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, affiliated with Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry Ministry in Houston, Texas (hereafter, SFRR). Since visiting the Jester III Prison Unit, the need to help newly released inmates reconnect with God was primarily related to offering the teachings of seven specific spiritual disciplines and demonstrating the concept of missional living and mental models.

Furthermore, the project curriculum revolved around seven spiritual disciplines, hoping that, upon completing the project, all participants would experience a change of mind, reconnect with God, and live productive lives in society. Ways to reach these outcomes were to demonstrate the concepts of the Great Commission, missional living, and mental models.

Furthermore, the responses and answers from the newly released inmates showed that other ministry programs that had been introduced to them from various volunteers and ministries seem to have focused only on non-productive ministry activities that distracted the newly released inmates from learning what it takes for someone to want to reconnect with God and live a productive life in society. In addition, some of the newly released inmates argued that they had tried to rely on their judgment in making life-changing decisions in this matter but had continued to fail, which caused their actions to become counterproductive.

The senior leadership of SFRR was contemplating ideas to create a Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Jester III Prison Unit program that would help address these specific concerns. The challenge, however, was finding people with the heart, passion, and experience to implement a practical prison ministry project and get the necessary support from the prison unit and ministry volunteers.

Therefore, it was determined that the project would need to follow the basic principles of "The Great Commission for it to address these specific concerns effectively." This included providing training by using seven spiritual disciplines and demonstrating the concepts of missional living and mental models to positively impact helping the newly released inmates reconnect with God and live productive lives in society.

Therefore, the purpose of this project is to lead a group of newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, who want to reconnect with God and want to live productive lives in society using spiritual disciplines and missional living affiliated with Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry in Houston, Texas.

## Ministry Setting

The Jester III Prison Unit is a TDCJ state jail founded on unincorporated land in Fort Bend County, Texas. The prison unit is on U.S. Highway 90A, four miles east of central Richmond, Texas. The prison unit opened in July 1982 with about 940 acres of land, and it is housed on the same ground as the Jester I, Carol Vance, and Jester IV Units. Altogether, this state prison unit houses 1,131 inmates.[1]

1. "Unit Directory," Texas Department of Criminal Justice, accessed May 5, 2021, https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/unit_directory/j3.html.

SFRR, located in Houston, Texas, is a "Restoration Ministry." This ministry was organized in 2004 by Dr. Barbara Nelson and her husband, Pastor Michael Nelson, both ordained pastors. The Nelsons are Approved Volunteers and Mentors for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice System.

The Nelsons' ministry is based on their passion for community and behind the prison walls. Pastor Michael and Dr. Barbara Nelson are on-site pastors at the Eastham Medium Custody Chapel in Lovelady, Texas, where they conduct services every Sunday evening. The following summarizes how SFRR helps the Overcomer's Restoration and Reentry process in prison and community systems.

The SFRR's first ministry assignment was to conduct a Community Marriage Seminar. It was a fantastic seminar full of fun and fellowship. The Nelsons have been married for thirty years and believe that all marriages can be restored; they are troopers in marriage restoration. SFRR has conducted marriage seminars within the prison system at the Darrington Unit, Stringfellow Unit, and the Cleveland Correctional Unit through their belief in restoring marriages.

The ministry follows Matt 25:36, which states: "I was naked, and you clothed me, I was sick, and you visited me, I was in prison, and you came to me." In addition to assignments of prison worship services, the ministry attends various prison units within the State of Texas and holds Empowerment Seminars at multiple prisons throughout the year. These Seminars include games where the inmates win Christian books and receive powerful testimonies from ex-offenders (overcomers). In addition, each person gets a Certificate of Attendance that can be used to help them develop their Parole Packets upon

release. Moreover, SFRR has conducted baptisms for the Darrington Prison Unit in Rosharon, Texas, since 2013.

Over the years, SFRR has continued to help individuals transition from prison to home. They have also served as contacts for those who need help with resources, driver's licenses, shelters, halfway houses, food, clothing, and employment, to name a few.

SFRR supplies Annual Care Packets (soap, deodorant, and toothpaste) to individuals in the Jester III Main Unit and Jester III Trusty Unit during Christmas. The ministry prepared more than 1,000 Care Packets in 2016. In addition, SFRR was recently instrumental in replenishing the indigent hygiene supplies the Darrington Unit had exhausted because of the other inmates (overcomers) who had to shelter at Darrington the Brazos due to the flooding at their perspective units.

SFRR travels over 85,000 miles annually, serving people in Texas prisons each year. In addition, the ministry holds annual Community Restoration and Empowerment Seminars outside the prison, including resources for family members to help their loved ones upon release, panel discussions of members such as prison chaplains, sheriff department representatives, halfway house representatives, ex-offenders, ex-offender family members, and more. In addition, they are available to help family members as their loved ones transition home.

SFRR has access to multi-purpose facilities in the local and surrounding areas to help overcomers and their family members with computer training, clothing, connections with employment, halfway houses, clothing, food pantries, and so on.

The SFRR team consists of about twenty-five partners who partner in this effort. The senior leadership has a passion for soul winning, believing that everyone should have personal and effective relationships with God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

## Project Outcomes and Measurable Assessments

The project was designed with three outcomes in mind. The first outcome was developed to see how many of the overcomers newly released from the Jester III Prison Unit actually completed the project using the Great Commission's concepts, missional living, mental models, and the project's curriculum related to seven specific spiritual disciplines.

By using the project's curriculum, the second outcome was designed to see which of the seven spiritual disciplines mentioned in the project would actually help change the minds of the newly released inmates to reconnect with God and inspire them to live productive lives in society. At the close of the seven-month project, the measurement included an evaluation to address which spiritual discipline(s) helped their quest to reconnect with God and live productive lives in society.

The third outcome was developed to measure and address how many newly released inmates actually changed their minds and wanted to reconnect with God to live productive lives in society. The plan was to discover ways for the newly released inmates to share their experience(s) in the project and to address whether the overall project caused them to change their minds and reconnect with God or not.

As measurable assessment tools, weekly study lessons, test assessments, metric systems, surveys, and individual testimonies were designed. In addition, the assessment measurements included comprehensive participant attendance data, personal spiritual

growth data, mental health assessment, and support data related to spiritual disciplines, which were mentioned in the core curriculum before and after the project's implementation. Furthermore, the evaluation included observations and statistics about the overall progress of SFRR's support in this matter.

The vision from the ministry leadership of SFRR and the project director was to develop a consistent program for the Jester III Prison Unit that allowed newly released inmates the opportunity to change their lives for the better. With research in biblical, historical, theoretical, and practical foundations, the dream was that spiritual and mental growth could be achieved for the group of inmates targeted in this project. The report now turns to the specific foundations researched.

## Relevant History of Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry

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The SFRR team consists of about twenty-five partners who partner in this effort. The senior leadership has a passion for soul winning, believing that everyone should have personal and effective relationships with God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

## Relevant Personal History of Ministry

The call to ministry was first experienced in the early seventies while living a life as a born-again Christian. As time passed and through the elegance of God, the power of the Holy Spirit had been activated to consider accepting the call to ministry. Serving as a junior deacon, Sunday school teacher, musician, and praise and worship leader, led to opportunities to preach and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, the official call to ministry had not been accepted at the time.

The call to preach and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ was officially accepted during the late eighties. The overall involvement in ministry came from the Holiness-Pentecostal experience. The ministry foundation was retrieved through the religious affiliation with the Fire-Baptized Holiness (F.B.H) Church of God of the Americas, initially organized and founded under Bishop William Edward Fuller, Sr., in 1908.

However, through a local church affiliation at the New Zion F.B.H Church in Lawrence, New York, where Pastor David Rivers, Sr. was the Senior Pastor for fourteen years, a strong relationship with God to regularly do ministry was developed. The experience and practices in ministry continued with the affiliation and fellowship at the Washington Temple Church of God in Christ in Brooklyn, New York, under the pastoral leadership of Bishop F. D. Washington, Sr.

During the continued relationship and fellowship between these two church affiliations, a passion for outreach ministry began. Being raised in an urban community in Queens, New York, allowed for more opportunities to help fulfill the Great Commission through community outreach and urban community street ministry.

After moving to Houston, Texas, in 1989, a fellowship began with various Christian religious organizations. Finally, in 1992, and after becoming licensed and ordained to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ under Rev. Williams, Sr. from the Greater Progressive Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, the community outreach ministry expanded across the local city, state, and nationwide.

For the past thirty-five years, a continued experience in preaching and ministry affiliations has grown tremendously. Due to the current pastoral, preaching, musical gifts, and talents in the ministry, more pastoral, preaching, and musician ministry opportunities with many local churches in Houston, Texas, were offered. By following the works and teachings of the Apostle Paul and realizing that God had undeniably activated a call to preach the gospel and make disciples through the power of the Holy Spirit, it became clear that these actions should continue as a lifestyle.

In 2013, a Bachelor of Arts in Telecommunications with a Radio, Television, and Film specialization from Texas Southern University in Houston was earned. In 2014, a Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling degree in 2017 and a Master of Divinity in Leadership from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia were also earned. Presently, a Doctor of Ministry degree specializing in Pastoral Leadership from Houston Graduate School of Theology is in progress.

Additionally, by serving as one of the prison ministry partners at Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry in Houston, Texas, current ministry responsibilities support the Standing in Faith Prison Ministry affiliated with the Texas Dept of Criminal Justice's Jester III Prison Unit Richmond was accepted. Through these ministry responsibilities, a positive relationship with current and newly released inmates shows unconditional love and humility on behalf of Jesus Christ.

Regarding this project, the ministry's responsibility is to minister to newly released inmates out of their devotion to Jesus Christ, whether they are believers or unbelievers of the faith. As a licensed and ordained minister, the actions are always to be impartial, show unconditional love, and look to help everyone, just as Jesus did.

The daily ministry responsibilities focus on the Great Commission, classic spiritual disciplines, missional living, and mental models, which are considered predictions for the call of ministry into full service. Since this type of ministry has been proven, it has become vital for the actions and continuation to minister to newly released inmates regularly.

In the project, the ministry will emphasize a sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ with newly released inmates, so they can come to recognize God and receive Jesus as

their personal Savior. The Holy Spirit's power will effectively be implemented to help the newly released inmates experience Jesus Christ in a way for them to know how important Jesus is to their daily living. Throughout this project, the overall ministry responsibilities will include ministering to the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of the newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, to help them reconnect with God and live productive lives in society.

## Topics for Project Research

The initial research to develop the project proposal has uncovered relevant information about creating a consistent connection between newly released inmates and God related to spiritual disciplines. Early findings will be shared in support of the decision to make this proposal.

This project's biblical and theoretical foundations will focus on scriptural information related to the Great Commission, Matthew, and the Great Commission, Jesus' meeting with his disciples, baptism, evangelism, worship, teaching, and discipleship. To reconnect with God, one must know that he must understand that God loves him unconditionally through the actions of his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.[2]

The historical foundation of the research chapter will survey three key figures in the development of spiritual disciplines in modern times, such as Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, and Adele Calhoun, and their insight on seven classic spiritual disciplines such as mediation, prayer, study, submission, service, confession, and worship. Academic

2. H. N. Ridderbos. *Matthew*, Bible Student's Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 556.

scholarly sources will support each classic spiritual discipline to learn the critical foundation of each spiritual discipline.

- Meditation: "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Jos 1:8). Meditation can be a wonderful place to start for a person who wants to reconnect with God.[3]

- Prayer: "Pray continually" (Thess 5:17). It is not complicated for one to view prayer as an essential part of his spiritual life. However, it might be challenging for one to learn prayer as a spiritual discipline. Therefore, one must learn to involve other disciplines and spiritual activities if prayer is effective in his life.[4]

- Study: "But be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to evaluate and approve what God's will is his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom 12:2). As loneliness can be the crucial discipline of restraint for the early part of one's spiritual life, a study can become the primary discipline of his first commitment.[5]

- Submission: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Eph 5:21). In the act of submission, one can engage the experience of those in his fellowship who are qualified to direct his efforts in growth and who then add the weight of his wise authority on the side of his willing spirit to help him do the things he would like to do and refrain from the things he does not want to do.[6]

- Service: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col 3:23-24). Service allows one to help others without conditions. As one continues to serve others, he begins to position himself to create a connection or reconnection with God.[7]

- Confession: "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (Jas 5:16). Confession can be the practice of letting others, safe and trusted people, no one's most profound strengths, weaknesses, or

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3. Richard J. Foster. *Celebration of Discipline.* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 19.

4. Dallas Willard. *The Spirit of The Disciplines.* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 186.

5. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 55.

6. Willard, *The Spirit of The Disciplines*, 190.

7. Ibid., 182.

failures. Therefore, one of the best ways to receive support and kindness from others is through the practice of confession.[8]

- Worship: "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks" (Jn 4:23). Since the emphasis of silence is for one to listen to God, the focus of worship is to experience God's presence. Worship begins when one learns who God is, as it is not about the music, one's emotions, or his feeling. Instead, worship is about one giving God the credit he deserves. Since God is All-Mighty, worship encourages one to approach him with consistency.[9]

  "Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Nevertheless, surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt. 28:16-20).

The practical foundation of this project will focus on the concept of missional living[10] and mental models.[11] Therefore, a project curriculum will be used that follows the command Jesus gave to his disciples in fulfilling "The Great Commission" by presenting seven classic spiritual disciplines to a group of (20) newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, and demonstrating the actions of missional living and using the concept of mental models in hopes that the newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas would change their minds, want to reconnect with God and want to live a productive life in society.

Throughout the project, it is the goal that the newly released inmates can employ new missional living and mental models by using the seven classic spiritual disciplines to

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8. Richard J. Foster. *Richard J. Foster's Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983), 59.

9. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 138.

help them learn the descriptions of reality that would help them reconnect with God and want to live a productive life in society.

## Project Overview

To this point, highlights about the overall relationship between the overcomers and God from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, will be revealed. Therefore, this project's scope is to help the overcomers from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, reconnect with God using seven classic spiritual disciplines.

Steps to achieve the project goal and objectives include the use of a project curriculum, which would include but not limited to (1) reading, reflecting, and responding to a model of missional living, mental models, discipleship, small group setting, and different modes of prayer for specific personality types; and (2) using physical face to face locations, virtual conferencing, and all social media outlets to help participants discover their relationship with Jesus Christ which would be designed to assist in the reconnection process.

## Preliminary Project Resources

Following initial research in the practices of spiritual disciplines and missional living, this project will draw from the readings and research of a few authors as it relates to the terms "spiritual disciplines," "missional models," "mental models," and "the Great Commission," such as:

- Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978.
- Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives.* San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1999.

- Calhoun, Adele A. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015.

- Newbigin, Lesslie, and Paul Weston. *Lesslie Newbigin: Missionary Theologian: a Reader* Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006.

- DeBono, E. *I Am Right; You Are Wrong: Mental Models* Penguin Books, 1991.

- Joel Arthur Barker, *Future Edge: Discovering the New Paradigms of Success* New York: W. Morrow, 1992.


## Procedural Outline and Timeline

A. Meet with the Senior Pastors of Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry (January 2020).

B. Present plan proposal to Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry and the Jester III Prison Unit Administrative Team (February 2020).

C. Examine past and current philosophies of prison ministry at the Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry (March 2020).

D. Meet with assigned volunteers to complete all responsibilities (April 2020).

E. Design training sessions with potential volunteers for the project (May 2020).

F. Project Begins: Confirm participants who wish to take part in the project by having one-on-one interviews. Then, implement the project curriculum to the (20) newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas (June 2020).

G. Evaluate the project (March 2021).

H. Complete the full draft of the Project Report for submission (June 2021).

I. Graduation (December 2021).

## Organizational Structure and Resources for Project Report

Chapter I, Introduction, will state the problem within the project's context, which is the need to lead a group of newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, to reconnect with God who wants to live productive lives in society using spiritual disciplines and missional living affiliated with Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry in Houston, Texas.

The proposed or envisioned solution to the problem is to create and implement a project curriculum that is based on leading, teaching, and training the newly released inmates on how to reconnect with God using seven classic spiritual disciplines.

The project report will address the importance of the research, which is to solve the issue of newly released inmates who are currently disconnected from God by using a project curriculum that will focus on seven specific spiritual disciplines such as meditation, prayer, study, submission, service, confession and worship through the concept of "The Great Commission," missional living and mental models practices. The measurable outcomes will be various evaluations, surveys, questionnaires, assessments, and testimonies from the newly released inmates.

In addition, it would include measuring how many newly released inmates have effectively reconnected with God through the affiliation with Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry by demonstrating the concept of seven classic spiritual disciplines and missional living.

Chapter II, the Research chapter, will include various sections from the following list: biblical and theoretical, historical, and practical foundations of the project, including the segments already mentioned in this proposal.

Chapter III, Action, will show what was done during the project, how it was conducted, and by whom, why, how, and when. This chapter will focus on telling the story of the project in every aspect in leading newly released inmates from the Jester III Prison Unit in Richmond, Texas, to reconnect with God who wants to live productive lives in society using spiritual disciplines and missional living affiliated with Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry in Houston, Texas.

Chapter IV, Evaluation, will report the evaluative tools employed to measure the statistical data, both qualitative and quantitative. These will include observations and summaries from the pre-and post-project questionnaires, statistical measurements of increases or decreases in the participation of the newly released inmates, and the overall effect developed in their use of the project.

Chapter V, Conclusion, will then state the understanding of what could have been done differently in future attempts, what plan to go from here, and other ministries who may want to use this project.

## Project Accountability

Once the permission is granted by the Doctor of Ministry Committee at HGST, the project will begin. The Administrative Council of Standing in Faith Restoration and Reentry in Houston, Texas, which consists of Dr. Barbara, Pastor Michael Nelson, and the Jester III Prison Unit officials, will work with the project director. In addition, an Advisory Committee will be put in place to give moral support to the project director.

## Project File

The project file will include surveys and composites of personality inventories with a summary of the findings. The project curriculum used in the project will be included as a resource for the Project Report Appendix. Regular reports will be given to the supervisory team accounting for the project's progress, and records of these documents will be kept or deleted on or by the time the project ends. Documentation of individual preparation and meetings with the project advisory team members will continue until the project is officially underway. Action items will be included to keep a record of stories and events along the way. It is the goal that the overall project will conduct the purposes set forth herein.

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